

**“JOY AND DELIGHT TO THE MINDS OF THE WISE” :  
THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE IN THE  
DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY**

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## Abstract

This work is intended as an exploration and development in a Buddhist context of a previously neglected area in the study of sacred texts, identified by William Graham as “the sensual dimension”, or the response of a community to its sacred texts. The focus of the study is the Dhammapada Commentary, a Pāli narrative text. As a genre of religious literature, narrative has either been over-emphasised or disregarded by scholars in the study of sacred texts. The thesis presented is that the Dhammapada Commentary can be examined, utilizing a narrative theory formulated by Ian Reid, which involves the analysis of the way texts are framed by readers. Four areas are explored, including the form of text’s presentation, the particular preoccupations revealed in the text and brought to the text, the structure of text as commentary and how the text is seen in relation to other texts. Of particular significance are the preoccupations displayed in the text and the emphasis in the text on evoking a particular response to the text, through which the text is aligned intertextually with an already established mode of response. The implications of this, particularly for the nature of the relationship between canon and commentary, are also considered.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study represents the fruit of a modern Western scholar's engagement with an ancient Buddhist text. It is concerned with the identification and examination of the role played by textual material in spiritual development. It is interpretative rather than hermeneutical, in the sense that it is an attempt to understand a text in its context as part of a corpus of sacred literature belonging to particular communities, rather than to affix a meaning. This endeavour is not primarily an investigation of the social or historical dimension of a text but instead, focuses on the mechanisms by which different communities of interpreters seek to construct meaning.

Lopez (1988: 5) has identified some issues which he believes are characteristic of the hermeneutical enterprise in Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> In particular, he considers the relationship between interpretation and soteriology<sup>2</sup> and he portrays hermeneutics in Buddhism, as an attempt to overcome an inherent sense of alienation experienced by interpreters at a distance from the founder of the tradition:

The Buddhist exegete suffers from a displacement, an absence; he did not sit in the circle at the feet of the Buddha and hear the doctrine that was intended especially for him. Now the Buddha is gone, the audience is gone; now the teaching must be the teacher. The exegete is constantly in search of his place in the absent circle, and his hermeneutics provide the compass. (1988: 9)

In this respect, there is common ground between the traditional exegete and the modern interpreter in the attempt to bridge this gap: each encounters obstacles in interpretation and constructs strategies to resolve such issues.

Gombrich has also commented upon the interval between the fixing in writing of the Pāli Canon and Commentaries, observing that not only are the Commentaries removed in time from the *Nikāya* but also in space (1992: 160-1). Nevertheless, it is his view that it is still possible to discover more about the audiences to whom the Buddha expounded his teaching:

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<sup>1</sup> Lopez mentions four issues he believes to be central to Buddhist hermeneutics: the use of skilful means (*upāya*) as a hermeneutical principle, the role of spiritual development in understanding a text, the relationship between hermeneutics and soteriology and the existence of a historical consciousness in Buddhism. Smith (1993: 168f) notes that theories of scripture in Buddhist texts tend to be implicit and he identifies three general types: "the biblioclasm paradox", (the scripturalization of a distrust of the written word); symbolism, (texts represent a transcendent reality); "Buddha-word" (the teaching of an enlightened one).

<sup>2</sup> Smith also highlights this relationship as an important part of any notion of scripture:

The meaning of words is at issue here. It is reductionist to hear in '*dharma*' only Buddhist teaching, not "final truth and goodness"; in '*Buddha*', only Siddhartha Gautama; in scriptures, only what they say. (1993: 174)

We shall never know all the assumptions in the minds of the audiences to whom the Buddha preached, but we can know a good deal, and I find that not enough use has yet been made of that knowledge. (1990: 11)

Through knowledge of historical linguistics and comparison with extant texts from other traditions, Gombrich argues that it is possible to deduce from the Commentaries not only something of the conceptual background and assumptions of the Buddha and his audiences but also the original meaning conveyed by the texts:

An important part of the history of a religion is of course how it interprets its own tradition, including its textual tradition. But that does not alter the fact that the texts had specific meanings to their original authors, and moreover, since we can assume that those authors were competent communicators, to their original audiences. (1992: 160)

This view is illustrative of one kind of interpretative endeavour: the analysis of a textual tradition to discover the original meaning.<sup>3</sup> However, not all modern interpreters share this view. Biardeau (1968) adopts a radically different approach in the interpretation of the *Purāṇa*. The desire to reconstruct the original work from extant recensions of the *Mahābhārata*, argues Biardeau, is based upon the aims of Western textual criticism, designed for written texts. This, she attributes to the quest for historicity, which, in the case of the *Mahābhārata*, is the attempt to construct an authoritative version by tracing the older portions of the text to Vyāsa as an historical figure rather than a mythic author, thereby ignoring the emphasis upon authoritativeness in the Indian context. While it is the case that in Buddhism, the relationship between oral and written traditions is slightly different from Hinduism, Biardeau's cautionary view serves to highlight an important methodological assumption on the part of some modern interpreters: that the original meaning of the text can be illuminated through a particular analytical method, applied from a privileged vantage point.<sup>4</sup>

Schopen has identified other issues of interpretation involved in textual analysis. He notes the preoccupation with textual material amongst modern scholars and contends that the primacy of the text as a source for constructing Buddhism may be entirely misplaced:

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<sup>3</sup> Tracy identifies such an approach as a rather "romantic notion of interpretation", involving "intuiting the meaning of the text by empathizing with the mind of the author" or by attempting to reconstruct the original audience or social context (1984: 297).

<sup>4</sup> Gombrich provides a convenient example: he states that the availability of parallel texts has allowed modern interpreters access to information of which the commentators were unaware (1992: 161).

But notice too that this position, which gives overriding primacy to textual sources, does not even consider the possibility that the texts we are to study to arrive at a knowledge of “Buddhism” may not even have been known to the vast majority of practicing Buddhists—both monk and lay. It is axiomatically assumed that they not only were known but were also important, not only were “read”, but were also fully implemented in actual practice, but no evidence in support of these assumptions, or even arguments for them, is ever presented. (1991: 5)

Schopen cites evidence to suggest that the texts, which are regarded as producing knowledge of “Buddhism”, may not even have been known by most practising Buddhists, in both lay and monastic circles. Thus, the primacy accorded to textual knowledge is indicative of the conception of knowledge of a particular group of interpreters and thus reveals more about interpretative assumptions than the original meaning of a text. Schopen holds that at the heart of the search for original meaning is the mistaken assumption that “scriptural” texts are historical, rather than “carefully contrived ideal paradigms”:

Notice too that no mention is made of the fact that the vast majority of the textual sources involved are “scriptural,” that is to say formal literary expressions of normative doctrine; and notice, finally, that no thought is given to the fact that even the most artless formal narrative text has a purpose, and that in “scriptural” texts, especially in India, that purpose is almost never “historical” in our sense of the term. (1991: 5)

and he goes on to add in a footnote that even those texts which have been regarded as historical documents, such as the *Mahāvamsa*, are intended to fulfil a very different function: it is said in the *Mahāvamsa* that the text has been compiled to arouse spiritual reflection and to exhort the audience to spiritual action.

Indeed, it is possible, according to Smith, that “text” may not even be the right term to apply to scripture:

It misleads insofar as it may suggest any sort of passivity, or subordination; as if the text were to be thought of first, as a given, with people’s response to it subsequent and derivative. (1993: 19)

Scripture is used generally to mean sacred text but, as Folkert and others have noted, this usually means written sacred text. Folkert (1993: 36f) argues that this narrow definition of scripture ignores the diversity of forms “the word” can take:

the general use of ‘scripture’ to equal ‘sacred text’ can have the effect of shutting us off from the great richness and variety that ‘the word’ encompasses. (1993: 39)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Folkert cites the phenomenological approach of van der Leeuw as an example of a model which can

Graham (1987a) stresses the importance of acknowledging that scripture has oral, aural, as well as written forms and he explores briefly an aspect of scripture, “the sensual dimension”, which refers to the response of a community to its sacred texts. This idea is developed by Smith and, at the heart of his notion is scripture as an essentially human activity:

On close enquiry, it emerges that being scripture is not a quality inherent in a given text, or a type of text, so much as an interactive relation between that text and a community of persons (though such relations are by no means constant). One might even speak of a widespread tendency to treat texts in a “scripture-like” way: a human propensity to scripturalize. (1993: ix)

For Smith, the element of human involvement is fundamental and he underlines the importance of acknowledging that scripture has a relational dimension: it denotes the relationship between a text and a community. Very little exploration of this aspect of scripture has been undertaken in connection with collections of Buddhist texts<sup>6</sup> and neither have Pāli texts been examined as rhetorical literature or even propaganda, to determine how the response of the audience can be manipulated.<sup>7</sup>

The conflation of the “scriptural” and “historical” has resulted in a view of scripture, which is assumed to be monolithic and applicable to all traditions. However, an increasing awareness amongst scholars of the unrepresentative nature of such a notion of scripture is beginning to emerge. Models of canon which encompass a multiplicity of conceptions within traditions are enabling scholars not only to review the connection between text and practice but also to gain a more complete picture of the complex dynamic which characterizes the interplay of sacred text and community. Such interaction is the result of the activity of readers of various kinds, each of whom brings different expectations or preoccupations to the interpretation of a text. Consequently, it is often the case that a number of different interpretations arise and this is a cause of disquiet amongst some scholars, who fear that this will amount to infinite number of subjective interpretations:

... the view prevails that the meaning of a text is that ascribed to it by each reader or each generation of readers; that it has no objective or inherent

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accommodate this diversity. On van der Leeuw’s model, scripture is one of seven categories of “word”, which range across a variety of roles of word and sound in religious life (1993: 38).

<sup>6</sup> Notable exceptions are to be found in the work of de Silva (1995), Werner (1993) and Gokhale (1981).

<sup>7</sup> Here the work of Whitelam (1984) in Biblical studies is particularly instructive. Gombrich (1992) has analysed the *Aggaññasutta* as a parody of Brāhmanical theories of creation.



meaning, and the grounds for preferring one interpretation to another, if any, are thus political or matters of personal preference. (Gombrich 1992: 159)

Other scholars regard this fear as groundless, since it is not the case that all possible interpretations are valid. There are, writes Eco, criteria which make certain interpretations “more interesting than others” (1990: 5) or, in the words of Hoffman, there is “a range of acceptable options within which judgment may operate” (1992: 210) and Fish has identified mechanisms for ruling out readings:

... when one interpretation wins out over another, it is not because the first has been shown to be in accordance with the facts but because it is from the perspective of its assumptions that the facts are now being specified. (Fish 1980: 340)

This is based on his view that, rather than being the result of reading texts, interpretation shapes the way texts are read and he develops this view further:

The mistake is to think of interpretation as an activity in need of constraints, when in fact interpretation is a *structure* of constraints. (1980: 356)

For Fish, the activity of interpretation is established by a literary institution, which imposes constraints by validating only a limited number of interpretations, thereby constructing a measure of acceptability (1980: 342).

That there are a limited number of interpretative possibilities amongst traditional exegetes is clear from the texts themselves and will continue to form the subject of scholarly study. In addition, the extent to which the range of interpretations from ancient and modern scholarly communities coincide is an issue which will remain at the focus of other studies. This study will incorporate the work of both ancient and modern interpreters through the application of a particular theoretical framework for the analysis of narratives from the Dhammapda Commentary. This interpretative strategy can be aligned with the field of literary theory referred to as Reader-Response Criticism.<sup>8</sup> An immediate objection levelled at such an enterprise could be the danger of reductionism in treating a scriptural text in the same way as an “ordinary” piece of literature. In addition, with regard to the Pāli Commentaries, there is no consensus amongst scholars on their origin as oral or literary works. Gombrich asserts that, whilst the evidence suggests that the Commentaries were written down late in the first century BCE, it is not unreasonable to assume that there was a period of oral transmission prior to this

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<sup>8</sup> For overviews, see Suleiman & Crosman (1980) and Freund (1987).

(1992: 160). Malalasekera takes a different view:

With regard to the Sinhalese commentaries, said to have been compiled by Mahinda, their very nature precludes the possibility of having been handed down orally. It may be that in Vaṭṭagāmaṇi's time they were still unarranged, rare, imperfect and full of inaccuracies, as even now in manuscripts. At Aluvihāra the text was rehearsed and commentaries revised and distributed. (1994: 45)

This debate will continue to preoccupy Pāli studies. The orientation of this study is to regard the Dhammapada Commentary as part of the collection of texts, belonging to a number of communities of interpreters, used in both written and oral contexts.

The theory employed is also to a certain extent determined by the form of the Dhammapada Commentary itself, which is a largely narrative text, providing the setting for the pronouncement of the Dhammapada verse(s) by the Buddha. The first translation into English of the Pāli Dhammapada Commentary was undertaken by Burlingame in 1921 as part of the Harvard Oriental Series. Burlingame is of the view that the predominantly narrative form of the text serves to inhibit what he perceives to be the function of a commentary and he regards the content of the narratives as legendary material, closely linked to a pan-Indian folktale tradition. That there are similarities between the collection of tales incorporated into the Dhammapada and Jātaka Commentaries has already been remarked upon. Hazra (1991: 206) assents to the view offered by Law that the Dhammapada Commentary is heavily dependent for its material on the Jātaka Commentary. This view is also shared by von Hinüber, who attributes the close coherence between stories in the two commentaries as the result of the Dhammapada Commentary having been “rebuilt” through the influence of the *Jātaka* narratives (1996: 134).<sup>9</sup> Hazra also views the Dhammapada Commentary as supplementary to the Jātaka Commentary:

In fact the commentary on the Dhammapada forms a valuable supplement to the commentary on the Jātaka, and, like the latter, contains many an ancient, popular narrative theme, some of which are well known in universal literature, far beyond the borders of India. (1991: 209)<sup>10</sup>

Hazra continues his study of the Dhammapada Commentary by analysing selected

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<sup>9</sup> This, von Hinüber argues, was due to the existence of independent commentarial traditions compiled by reciters of each text: at some point, an old separate Dhammapada Commentarial tradition was revised. The lack of reference to the transfer of stories from Dhammapada to Jātaka Commentaries indicates a later date of composition for the Dhammapada Commentary (1996: 135).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, his comments on the Jātaka Commentary amount to little more than one paragraph (1991: 223).



narratives to determine from the contents the identity of historical figures and the social, political and economic conditions of India in the fifth century CE (1991: 211-23). Indeed, it can be seen that the narratives of the Dhammapada Commentary share many of the same motifs as Indian narrative literature classified as folk tales. However, the ascription of authorship to Buddhaghosa precludes this classification, according to Propp: the Dhammapada Commentary cannot be considered as a set of folktales because folklore never has authors (1984: 6).

The main sources for this study are gathered from Pāli material, with analogies drawn from a wider Indian tradition of sacred and narrative literature, in an attempt to broaden the understanding of the Pāli Commentarial tradition. Arguably, there are several other commentaries still to be translated but it is not the purpose of this study to offer a revised translation of the Commentary.<sup>11</sup> The inclusion of translations from English editions is designed to acknowledge the presence of another equally important community of interpreters. Occasionally, it has been necessary to include alternative renderings, in the light of a different understanding of the significance of a term but mostly such attempts fail to capture the rhythm and exuberance of the original translation.<sup>12</sup>

The first chapter outlines some of the directions taken by scholars in the analysis of narrative elements of religious texts and offers an alternative model, focusing on the relationship between the text and the community which constructs it. Graham's notion of scripture as a relational concept is examined, using the work of theorists located under the broad umbrella of Reader-Response Criticism. Some of the pitfalls are explored and Reid's typology of framing is adopted. In the light of this, the nature of canon and commentary is reviewed in the second chapter, through an examination of accounts of the Council at Rājagaha and the oral aspects of Pāli literature. A re-orientation of the conventional understanding of the relationship between canon and commentary is proposed to highlight the importance of exegetical strategies adopted by communities of interpreters to establish the authority of a set of texts. In Chapter Three, framing strategies are applied to the Dhammapada Commentary, illustrating how various communities of interpreters, both ancient and modern, have constructed the text. Features of the text are identified to demonstrate how the narrative form serves the

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<sup>11</sup> "Commentary" and "Commentaries" will be used to refer to a specific text or texts under discussion, whereas "commentary" will be used as a more general term. "Canon" and "canon" will be employed in the same way.

<sup>12</sup> My own translations are indicated using the standard method of abbreviation for extracts from Pāli texts and other scholars' work is indicated by abbreviating the title of the English translation. In addition, I have tried to avoid making English plurals out of Pāli words in the main body of the manuscript.

purpose of the commentarial enterprise. A more detailed examination of such a strategy is found in the fourth chapter: certain responses to the Commentary are specified in the Prologue, indicating not only how the text is to be seen in relation to other texts but also revealing the role of such responses in spiritual development. Finally, there is an examination of the preoccupation of the Commentarial narratives with exemplary monastic behaviour and the correction of erroneous views in the context of the competition to gain and retain followers.

## CHAPTER ONE

### NARRATIVE THEORY AND RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

#### INTRODUCTION

It is seldom a matter of debate that a body of religious literature is created when the teaching of a religious leader is collected and preserved by a group of followers. What is frequently disputed is the extent to which the resultant body of texts is representative of that teaching. This contention, which stems largely from the view that it is possible to extract the teaching from the texts themselves, has preoccupied a significant number of scholars examining the literature of a variety of religious traditions. Rather than offering illumination, such efforts are more successful in demonstrating a particular conception of knowledge. Feyerabend observes that the tendency to abstract is a sign that what he terms the “theoretical” aspect of knowledge has become predominant. This type of knowledge is governed by universal laws and theories, which render it unhistorical by identifying it with “what is permanent in the flux of history” (1987: 118). For Feyerabend, ideological debates occur when the theoretical aspect of knowledge prevails over a cultural discourse:

... arguments in favour of a certain worldview depend on assumptions accepted in some cultures, rejected in others, but which because of the ignorance of their defenders are thought to have universal validity. (1987: 299)

Problems of interpretation arise because the historical components of knowledge have been superseded and knowledge comes to be defined by what can be extracted from the written text and the element of participation is ignored. By contrast, the “empirical or historical” aspect of knowledge is characterized by particularity: it takes the forms of lists, stories, asides, demonstration by example and analogy and an emphasis on plurality. Such knowledge is generated by a process involving a teacher, pupil and shared social situation and the resulting knowledge can only be understood completely by those who participated in its production. Written notes are an aid only to the memory of participation and of little value to outsiders.<sup>1</sup> Of particular importance for Feyerabend

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<sup>1</sup> Feyerabend highlights the way in which this is reflected in choice of medium made by thinkers to express their ideas. Feyerabend reads significance into the fact that Plato’s ideas are presented in dialogue form in preference to other media such as drama, epic or poetry and, similarly, that Newton’s early papers outlining his theory of colour, took the form of a series of letters (1987: 109).

in the expression of historical traditions is the narrative form:

Concepts so introduced are not abstract entities, they are not separated from things. They are aspects of things ... they are adapted to the circumstances in which they come to the fore and they change accordingly. (1987: 113)<sup>2</sup>

For Feyerabend, contextual and particular features are integral to conceptions of knowledge. Drawing upon this insight, it will be demonstrated that the use of narrative form in religious literature can be understood more effectively by highlighting the circumstances in which such literature is produced.

## THE STUDY OF NARRATIVE IN RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

### Narrative as Mimesis

The presence of the narrative form in religious literature has caused scholars some difficulties. Recent research into narrative has produced a rather “uncritical enthusiasm for the story-form” (Estess 1974: 417). Common to these studies is an exploration of the similarities between life and literature.<sup>3</sup> Ledbetter argues that there is a close connection between what he calls “lived narrative” and narrative fiction, since both reveal and portray virtue. It is Ledbetter’s contention that narrative fiction has a religious dimension because it involves the discovery of value and it is motivated by the desire for “otherness” (1989: 8, 10). This desire is a wish for something other than what exists at the beginning of the narrative and reveals a single virtue which dominates all others in a given narrative:

This contact with otherness reveals a particular virtue as central to a particular narrative, a virtue that establishes a religious world-view within the narrative structure. (1989: 1)

Ledbetter proposes that this is achieved by identifying the interplay of the narrative elements (1989: 11).<sup>4</sup> For example, a character discovers the virtuous life by affirming

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<sup>2</sup> Feyerabend illustrates from the Homeric epic. He suggests that social relations such as virtues are “defined” by showing how they work in lifelike situations. Thus, Odysseus acts wisely but at times, his wisdom amounts to slyness or trickery. Feyerabend states that using this instance, readers or listeners gauge for themselves where the boundaries of wisdom lie (1987: 112-3).

<sup>3</sup> Examples include Bruner (1986) and Elsbree (1982).

<sup>4</sup> Ledbetter has identified what he believes to be four essential elements of narrative structure: tone, atmosphere, plot and character (1989: 10f).

or rejecting the values assigned by the plot or by embracing the otherness suggested by the atmosphere (transcendence of human control). Through this mimetic quality of narrative, Ledbetter develops his analysis to the point where he states that narrative has lifelike characteristics and to claim further that narrative fiction is “an extension of lived narrative” (1989: 72). In support of this view, he cites Barbara Hardy, who proposes that human consciousness is characterized by narrative processes, such as dreaming, remembering, planning and gossiping, extending this idea to the point where human existence is defined by the capacity to narrate and claiming:

In order to really live, we make up stories about ourselves and others.  
(Ledbetter 1989: 72)

Bruner identifies verisimilitude as one of the characteristics of the narrative (as opposed to the paradigmatic) mode of thought and he contends that narrative deals with “human or human-like intention and action, its vicissitudes and consequences” (1986: 13). A story describes events in the real world but it is a world which is somehow different.<sup>5</sup> Narayan maintains that lifelikeness bestows realism onto events, no matter how extraordinary (such as animals who can talk) but at the same time as a story reinforces conceptions of the world, it can also subvert them, “... pointing towards transcendent meanings instead” (1989: 243). Like Ledbetter, Narayan also draws a parallel between religion and narrative, noting the way in which both generate other worlds which “correct and complete” the world of ordinary existence (1989: 243). This view is based upon the perception that the structure of narrative leads towards order and completion: a narrative has a beginning, a middle and an end. By contrast, Propp contends that the distortive qualities of the folktale is one of its defining characteristics:

Folklore, especially in its early stages, is not a description of life. Reality is not reflected directly but through the prism of thought and this thought is so unlike ours that it can be difficult to compare a folklore phenomenon with anything at all. (1984: 10)<sup>6</sup>

After analysing four narratives from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, Srinivasan stresses the importance of the sequential arrangement of the myths but notes that the ordering is not one which brings resolution but substitution: one set of components is replaced by

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<sup>5</sup> Bruner believes that this lifelikeness is necessary in order for the text to be accessible to the reader, while at the same time allowing the reader to “fill in the gaps” generated by the strangeness, thereby creating a “virtual” text in response to the “actual” text (1986: 24; 35).

<sup>6</sup> Iser takes a similar view:

Fictional texts constitute their own objects and do not copy something already in existence. They do not have the determinacy of real objects. (1978: 23)



another as though resolving the former (1980: 198, 205). Other scholars have argued that the ordering is rather the subordination of the fragmentary, discontinuous nature of experience which creates a distortion of reality so that endings can occur:

The dynamic of the story, with its slow and structured series of endings, gives a sense of triumphant finality and a resolution of suffering impossible in the actual living of non-repetitive time. The familiar tale, with its regular and predictable endings, narrates and so creates ... the 'sense of an ending'. (Collins 1992b: 241-2)<sup>7</sup>

The tendency to order is in fact a rearrangement of components into a different order. Thus, in effect, the structure of narrative imposes an illusory order onto events, indicating that it is at least purposeful and possibly manipulative rather than naturally benign, as the view advocated by Ledbetter seems to suggest.

The view of narrative as mimesis is problematic, primarily because the desire for order and completeness identified in narrative structure overlooks the fragmentary, discontinuous aspects of experience. In addition, the boundary between life and literature becomes difficult to determine. As Estess points out, there *is* a difference between life and literature:

To imply, as is the tendency of religionists ... that story is by itself an adequate metaphor for interpreting human experience is to obscure the complexity of life under the rule of an aesthetic form. Life is distinguishable from literature, and the aesthetic categories applicable to storied literature do not exhaust human reality. (1974: 433)

### Didactic Narrative

An implication of Ledbetter's view is that narrative has a therapeutic dimension. Ledbetter claims that narrative fiction reveals the existential crises at the heart of human experience and suggests paradigmatic solutions.<sup>8</sup> Ledbetter's analysis has the effect of reducing narrative to a sense-making or problem-solving mode but also of rendering passive the role of the reader. However, it is not always the case that a reader adopts such a subdued role.<sup>9</sup> In outlining his view, Ledbetter reveals interpretive

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<sup>7</sup> Compare Frank Kermode's seminal book entitled *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Ledbetter states that he is adapting Eliade's definition of religion as "the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis" (*The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959, p. 210). In effect, Ledbetter has abstracted out of the context of Eliade's richer discussion and developed his theory on this basis.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in her study of the role of memory in medieval Europe, Carruthers explains how the relationship between text and reader was viewed actively as an encounter between minds. Carruthers

preoccupations particular to himself: the importance of establishing that narratives provide paradigmatic solutions.<sup>10</sup>

The idea that stories express human dilemmas metaphorically and provide resolutions within the story in the shape of a moral to be applied to an individual situation contributes to the characterization of narrative in religious texts as didactic. On this view, narrative is both the means of illustrating a particular teaching and the medium of instruction. In the introduction to her translation of the fourteenth century *Saddhammaratnāvaliya*, Obeyesekere describes the role the stories from this text played in her Buddhist upbringing:

The stories of the *Saddhammaratnāvaliya* and the *Jātaka Tales* have, I think, always performed this function, ever since they were translated into Sinhala. They have been central to the dissemination of Buddhist values and doctrine, and for this very reason were preserved and cherished, copied and recopied by monks, and passed on from generation to generation. (1991: x)

Whilst narrative serves as a medium for the edification of the community and the diffusion of the founder's teaching, neither of these modes exhausts the role played by narrative in religious literature and has led to some rather unreflective conclusions, whereby narrative is discarded in favour of other types of text, which conform to particular expectations concerning where the "real" teaching is to be located. In the study of Buddhist texts, such a devaluation of the narrative form can be seen particularly in relation to narratives of the Buddha's life. On account of the preoccupation with the idea of the Pāli Canon as a fixed body of texts characterized by philosophical discourses, a view which appealed particularly to Victorian commentators on Buddhism, accounts of the Buddha's life are regarded as having been embellished and, once stripped of all legendary material, the historical facts of the Buddha's life can then be discerned. By extension, other narratives can also be denuded of miraculous elements in order to distil "the Buddha's teaching". As a genre, narrative is perceived to obscure or dilute the "true" teaching. This view has continued to influence attitudes towards Buddhist narrative. For example, Jones believes that by reading the *Jātaka*

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demonstrates how a text was seen as a source of communally experienced wisdom for a reader's own life, gained by memorizing from it. Thus a reader's head was constantly filled with "a chorus of voices available instantly on any subject". It is therefore unlikely, she contends, that medieval readers believed their texts to be "authoritative maps for their actions". Medieval reading was an "hermeneutical dialogue" between the reader and other voices conjured up by the written letters (1990: 162, 186).

<sup>10</sup> Feyerabend identifies three assumptions underlying the idea of problem-solving: that it is important to solve problems, that there are clear cut methods for this and that some problems are universal. Feyerabend adds that not all cultures regard it as necessary to solve problems (1987: 299-300).

stories

... the reader will be able to gauge the extent to which this popular form of Buddhist teaching faithfully reflects or subtly distorts the teaching of those Nikāyas which constitute the heart of the Pāli Canon. (1979: p. xiv)

Such statements not only misunderstand the nature of Buddhist narrative but are also based upon presuppositions about the nature of both Buddhist scripture and community. In a like manner, Winternitz comments upon the *Vimāna-* and *Petavatthu*:

The truly great and profound doctrine of karman, which has found expression in Brahmanical as well as Buddhist texts in so many beautiful sayings and legends, is most clumsily explained by means of examples in these little stories, whose metrical form is their only poetical attribute. The stories, no doubt chiefly intended for laymen, are all made after one model. (1933: 98-9)<sup>11</sup>

There are two major assumptions underlying these and other such descriptions of Buddhist narrative. The first assumption is that the teaching of the Buddha is to be found in the abstract, philosophical doctrines and that these doctrines were made more accessible to lay audiences by illustrating them in narratives. Underlying this view is a socio-textual distinction, whereby the perception of canonical texts, containing philosophical doctrines, as the “real” teaching of the Buddha, are the preserve of monastic readers, whereas narrative texts, designed for popular consumption, are located in the commentaries. Such a distinction is not supported in the texts themselves, wherein it is not unusual for lay people to ask to hear portions of the so-called abstract, philosophical discourses and for monks to listen to stories.<sup>12</sup>

The second major assumption is concerned with comprehension. Implicit in the view that narrative is directed at lay audiences is the idea that the story form is a more easily understood medium and therefore more suited to the intellectual capacities of lay audiences. This view presupposes that the translation of such doctrines into a story form will necessarily make them comprehensible.<sup>13</sup> Examining the texts again, it

<sup>11</sup> Whilst these scholars have made otherwise valuable contributions to the study of Buddhism, at the same time they provide convenient examples of the kinds of assumption brought to the study of Buddhist narrative to which attention should be drawn.

<sup>12</sup> For example, in the Dhammapada Commentary, there is an episode in which a layman asks to hear the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* on his deathbed (DhpA i 129-32). Likewise, when monks ask the Buddha to explain a person's fortune or misfortune, the Buddha relates this in narrative form (DhpA i 311, 417; iii 150, et passim).

<sup>13</sup> More fundamentally, it presupposes that there are teachings which are abstract and philosophical. It could be argued that, according to the texts, the Buddha declined to speculate on those questions which were unanswerable and his teaching was empirical by nature. Later elaborations of his teaching could be described as abstract and philosophical but this is an external perception and one which has preoccupied much of Western scholarship on Buddhism to the exclusion of other aspects.



becomes clear that the choice of subject and method of teaching is not determined by socio-religious role but by ability to understand. The texts portray the Buddha as being able to perceive, through his supernatural powers, the disposition to understanding of individual members of his audience and he therefore chooses a subject most appropriate to the understanding of that person. The Buddha is presented as having no direct control over a person's ability to understand the teaching since this is determined by *kamma*. In the narratives which describe such encounters between the Buddha and a potential convert, it is not surprising to find that the Buddha is nearly always presented as choosing a person who has the correct dispositions to become a follower but there are occasions in which he is not always successful in evoking a response.

The basis upon which these assumptions are made is the postulation of a dichotomy between "true Buddhism" and "popular Buddhism".<sup>14</sup> This dichotomy has two forms, the first being based primarily upon the texts. "True Buddhism" was defined as that found only in the Pāli Canon and therefore no longer existing as such: what remained was nothing more than a corrupted form of an originally pure doctrine. Whilst it is the case that Buddhism as described in the Pāli Canon no longer exists in that form (and perhaps never did), it is erroneous to assert that this was the "true Buddhism" with the implication that what exists now is not really Buddhism at all. The second form of this dichotomy is based on observation of practices. "True Buddhism" is concerned with the ideal of winning release and therefore is identified as monastic. "Popular Buddhism" includes those beliefs and practices regarded as cultic and therefore associated with the laity. Both forms imply that everything which cannot be explained on the model of a pure, monastic ideal must belong to a degenerate form of Buddhism. For example, ritual activity, designed to earn merit, was widely regarded as a distinctive feature of "popular Buddhism" and undertaken specifically by lay people. On the basis of epigraphical evidence dating from second century BCE, material which pre-dates extant literary sources, Schopen has convincingly demonstrated that monks and nuns constituted a substantial proportion of those involved in donative merit-making activities connected with the stūpa cult and cult of images and that this proportion continued to increase as time went on (1985: 26).<sup>15</sup>

Narayan (1989) has identified another dimension of the didactic role of narrative in religious literature. She observed the way in which Swamiji, a contemporary *sādhū*,

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<sup>14</sup> For discussions, see Bechert (1973; 1978) and Southwold (1982; 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, Schopen adopts a more radical position and argues that epigraphical evidence does not support the view that the texts which have been relied upon as sources for "Buddhism" were widely known in Buddhist communities and, as a consequence, it is hard to argue that the ideal portrayed in the texts was ever fully operational in actual practice (1991: 5 n12; 8).

utilizes storytelling in his interactions with people who approach him for advice. Amongst her conclusions is that narrative serves as vehicle for instruction, in that the form of story allows listeners to remember and retain the principle being expressed but perhaps more significantly, that the effect of the story depends upon the participation of the audience (1989: 105). Whilst still attributing a didactic function to the narratives employed by the *sādhū*, Narayan acknowledges not only the presence of an audience but also the essential role it plays in shaping the text. In this way, she recognizes the relationship between text and community, a feature which the views of narrative outlined above either fail to address or to describe adequately.

### Narrative and Readers

Scholars are now beginning to acknowledge the role that a religious community plays in creating its corpus of sacred literature. Graham views scripture as a relational concept, referring to the contextual or functional quality of scriptural texts. He proposes that since scripture arises from the interaction of persons or groups with a text or texts, then “scripturality” can hardly be considered as some intrinsic property of a text itself. Thus a text is neither sacred nor authoritative in isolation from a community:

A book is only “scripture” insofar as a group of persons perceive it to be sacred or holy, powerful and portentous, possessed of an exalted authority, and in some fashion transcendent of, and hence distinct from, all other speech and writing. (1987a: 5)

An important corollary of viewing sacred texts in this way is the acknowledgment of the significance of the interaction between a community and its scripture. Graham has called this the “sensual dimension” of scripture or “the response of the faithful to their sacred text” (1987a: 6-7). By this, he intends to convey the idea that if scripture is to be viewed in relational terms, then, in addition to intellectual aspects, “sensual aspects of religiousness” must be considered, such as seeing, hearing and touching, all of which are observable responses to sacred texts:

A sacred text can be read laboriously in silent study, chanted or sung in unthinking repetition, copied or illuminated in loving devotion, imaginatively depicted in art or drama, solemnly processed in ritual pagentry, or devoutly touched in hope of luck and blessing. (1987a: 6)

Graham acknowledges the difficulty of systematizing religious responses to sacred

texts, on account of the diversity of such responses amongst individuals.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, for Graham, any conception of scripture must include recognition of its importance both as written and spoken word (1987a: 58). Graham's study is an attempt to re-orient the notion of scripture from a primarily written category to one which also incorporates both oral and aural dimensions:

Ideally, our knowledge of the textual history, doctrinal interpretation, ritual and devotional use, and political and social roles of a scriptural book should be joined to an awareness of these sensual elements in the response of the faithful to their sacred text. (1987a: 7)

and as such, he examines the problematic category of orality in relation to the scriptures of various religious traditions. Interestingly, Graham views scripture as a "religiohistorical" category rather than a literary one (1987a: 6). In this, he wishes to distinguish the interpretation of scripture which emphasizes the importance of context from the type of literary analysis which ignores the context in which the text arises. Whilst this is a valid observation, Graham perhaps overlooks those forms of literary theory which acknowledge the role of audience and context in the interpretative enterprise, particularly the way in which the audience can be directed by a text to produce certain responses.

#### GRAHAM'S DEFINITION EXAMINED

##### "Interpretive Communities" (Fish)

Of those scholars working in the field of Reader-Response Criticism, there are some whose work can be used to draw out some of the implications of Graham's view of scripture. One such feature, that scriptural qualities are dependent upon a community attributing them to a text, is similar to that advocated by Fish, who emphasizes the role of collective agreement in the production of literature:

What will, at any time, be recognized as literature is a function of a communal decision as to what will count as literature. (1980: 10-1)

As a consequence, the act of reading is determined by strategies agreed by an

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<sup>16</sup> This is a genuine concern but, rather than attempting to analyse such responses, it is certainly possible to examine how the texts themselves elaborate the ideal form of such responses.

“interpretive community”:

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties. In other words, those strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around. (1980: 14)

In effect, according to Fish, the reader “makes” literature. This claim is vulnerable to the challenge of subjectivism but Fish argues that as a member of a community, a reader is not acting as an isolated individual but as a participant in the decision as to what constitutes literature of a given interpretive community:

... the act of recognizing literature is not constrained by something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it. (1980: 11)<sup>17</sup>

Whilst Graham states that scripture is not an inherent property of a text but lies in the interaction of persons and texts, Fish has analysed such interaction to the point where he proposes that formal properties exhibited by texts arise because a reader understands them beforehand to be literary properties:<sup>18</sup>

In other words, it is not that literature exhibits certain formal properties that compel a certain kind of attention; rather, paying a certain kind of attention (as defined by what literature is understood to be) results in the emergence into noticeability of the properties we know in advance to be literary. (Fish 1980: 10-1)

Thus meaning is produced not by text or reader but by interpretive communities. The interpretive strategies which shape reading do not arise from a text: they mould a text:

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<sup>17</sup> Fish claims that the question of subjectivity and objectivity no longer applies since an interpretive community is simultaneously both and neither:

An interpretive community is not objective because as a bundle of interests, of particular purposes and goals, its perspective is interested rather than neutral; but by the very same reasoning, the meanings and texts produced by an interpretive community are not subjective because they do not proceed from an isolated individual but from a public and conventional point of view. (1980: 14)

This view is echoed by Graham:

A text becomes “scripture” in active, subjective relationship to persons, and as part of a cumulative communal tradition. No text, written or oral or both, is sacred or authoritative in isolation from a community. (1987a: 5)

<sup>18</sup> Graham does not completely relinquish the notion of text as an independent entity:

... the significant “scriptural” characteristics of a text belong not only to the text itself but also to its role in a community and in individual lives. (1987a: 6)



interpretive strategies are not put into execution after reading; they are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as is usually assumed, arising from them. (1980: 13)

Fish inverts the relationship between text and interpretation: rather than the meaning of a text being identified through interpretation, Fish argues that interpretation has to occur in order to create a text and that texts do not exist independently of readers' experience. Graham takes a similar view: he contends that a text is literature for as long as people recognize it to be so. Such "consensual recognition" is an important part of Graham's formulation (1987a: 5).

For Graham, disagreement arises when what is scripture for one group is just ordinary or false text for another. Fish explains such disagreement as the result of members of one interpretive community, with their own set of "assumed purposes and goals", failing to see the importance of another's text, because they do not share those of the other. The debate to settle such disputes is possible not because the text is stable but because there is stability in the structure of interpretive communities (1980: 15). Here, Fish seems to describe interpretive communities as generic, stable entities, yet it is the case that readers can switch allegiances and can react against institutionalized reading practices. Interpretive communities are continually evolving and shifting, with the result that interpretive communities can accept as literature texts from other interpretive communities, providing they understand the "assumed purposes and goals" of the other.

### Aesthetic Response (Iser)

In order to widen his definition of scripture to incorporate the oral dimensions of scripture, Graham is required to acknowledge what he describes as "the affective realm of religious life". However, he does not shy away from addressing the particular problem this poses:

To speak of scripture as more than authoritative documents or sources of doctrines poses questions of methodology as well as content. ... Such questions ... plunge us into a consideration of the affective role of texts in everyday life — a role that poses considerable problems of meaning and understanding. It is no simple task to pin down the impact of chanted texts as part of the multisensory, sometimes synaesthetic experience of communal worship. (1987a: 163)

The nature of aesthetic response to literary texts is analysed by Iser, who examines the theme of multiple meaning. Like Graham and Fish, Iser describes the act of reading as an interaction between text and reader in a way which generates meaning. This meaning is not a hidden quality of the text and it is not independent of the reader's participation. Iser further proposes that there is no one meaning but a range of possible meanings:

The interpreter's task is to elucidate potential meanings of a text, not restricted to one. (1978: 22)

Iser explains that a number of meanings arises from the interaction between text and reader because the relationship between them is not symmetrical: a text cannot adapt itself to each reader and readers cannot gauge from the text the accuracy of their views on it. Thus there is no security of a common situation between text and reader which can engender a single meaning. However, this lack of a common frame of reference between text and reader does allow for a number of possible meanings to occur:

Literary texts are constructed to confirm none of the meanings we ascribe to them, although by their structure they continually lead to such projections of meaning. (1971: 45)

For Iser, texts do not present real-life situations but rather diverge from the real experience of the reader and present views and perspectives in which the empirically known world of the reader appears changed. The variety of views and perspectives contained within a narrative text are divided into "segments" which are joined by "blanks". It is these blanks which generate the text's indeterminate status and thereby bring about the reader's participation in the production of meaning: in other words, the reader fills in the gaps.<sup>19</sup> Iser points out that the indeterminate status of a text is not a defect but is the basic element of aesthetic response. For Iser, rather than formulating meaning, texts initiate "performances of meaning". The aesthetic quality of a text is dependent upon its indeterminate status, which brings about the involvement of the reader. A reader refers the text to real-life verifiable factors. If a text is a mirror-like reflection of such factors, then it loses its literary quality and the text has minimal indeterminacy: the views it sets out are to be either accepted or rejected and thus the degree of the reader's participation is lessened.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Iser adds that the reader is not generally aware of such gaps (1971: 12).

<sup>20</sup> Iser calls this "counterbalancing" indeterminacy. If the text diverges from the empirically known world of the reader, then the reader counterbalances the text's indeterminacy by referring the text to real-life verifiable factors. If the text is an exact reflection, then the reader's participation is lessened and the text loses its literary quality. If the text is resistant to counterbalancing, then it will generate a

According to Iser, the response of the reader to a text is generated by the blanks in the text, which the reader fills in. Iser refers to this as an aesthetic response but does not elaborate upon why this is necessarily an aesthetic response, since what Iser seems to be describing is a literary response, namely the reaction of a reader to a piece of literature. This view presumes that texts are all made after the same type, all evoke the same kind of response from a reader and results in a narrow view of text.<sup>21</sup> Here Graham's category of scripture as religiohistorical is useful, in that the differentiation is made according to the way in which a text is used, yet he too precludes scripture being regarded as literature in the narrow literary sense.

Iser has also identified structures within a text which lead to indeterminacy (1971: 18-20). For example, comments, interspersing the narrative, which seek to interpret story from one consistent point of view, will diminish the reader's participation: that is, the reader can only agree or disagree with the comment. Religious texts are frequently regarded as expounding a single viewpoint throughout. For example, Granoff offers the following comment on the *Mañicūdāvadāna*:

The *Mañicūdāvadāna* closely guides our interpretation of the acts it describes by giving them a very specific context within the story itself, a particular time and place and way in which they occur in the story. (1991: 227)

For Iser, religious texts of this kind would not have the degree of indeterminacy necessary to generate an aesthetic response in the reader. However, if the reader is offered a number of viewpoints which are commented on, the reader has a greater opportunity to participate actively in the production of meaning. In this way, argues Iser:

... this particular structure involves the reader in the evaluative process and yet, at the same time, it controls the reader's evaluation (1971: 20)

and he describes how a text can sometimes confound a reader's expectations by taking a view contrary to what the reader has been led to believe is the view of the text.<sup>22</sup> Yet,

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response: the text may be a criticism of life with which the reader may or may not agree. Whatever reaction this generates — preconceptions are modified or the book is tossed aside — indeterminacy decreases or disappears because communication has taken place (1971: 9).

<sup>21</sup> According to Masson and Patwardhan (1969: xiv), a universal aesthetic experience bypasses the question of whether two individuals experience the same response to a piece of art, an issue which has preoccupied scholars of aesthetics in Western literature and this would create problems for Iser's analysis, which allows for readers to react differently to a given text.

<sup>22</sup> By way of illustration, Iser cites the episode from *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, in which Oliver asks for more gruel. Contrary to the reader's expectations, the narrator's comment indicates sympathy for the reaction of the workhouse staff rather than Oliver's request. (1971: 20).



even though the text “directs” the reader’s interpretation, not all readers will bring the same prior understanding to the text, as described by Fish above. The reader’s understanding will be determined by the agreed reading practices of the interpretive community to which he or she belongs, whereas for Iser, this is determined by the structures of the text itself and not by anything outside the text.

### The Text as Reader (Prince)

Structures within a text which direct reading and therefore the response to a text have also been analysed by Prince. Through his work in narratology, Prince has identified elements of the text which perform this function. Like Fish, Prince argues that comprehension of a text is to a certain extent dependent upon influences external to the reader. Prince proposes that a narrative is made up of several cultural codes,<sup>23</sup> which combine to produce a complex code, which in turn, generates a variety of responses to a given text. A reader can identify the function of a given narrative passage by identifying the code which frames it. This is indicated by what Prince refers to as “reading interludes” (1980: 234f) or “metanarrative signs” (1982: 116f). A fundamental feature of Prince’s view is that the act of reading involves the organization and interpretation of the narrative in terms of several codes and he maintains that “metanarrative signs do part of this work for us” (1982: 125). According to Prince, a metanarrative sign is an element which comments, interpreting old material rather than supplying new details. In this respect, it can take the form of a section of the narrative which explicitly refers to its code.<sup>24</sup> The presence of metanarrative signs amounts to a fragmentary text within the text, constituting a way of determining the text’s communicability and readability. Metanarrative signs can define a narrator and a narratee and the relationship between them, such as how a narrator views the knowledge and sophistication of the reader.<sup>25</sup> Metanarrative signs function as indications of how a text is to be understood because they refer to the codes that frame a narrative. On this basis, Prince concludes that a narrative text can perform some of the reading operations itself.<sup>26</sup> Thus, at certain times,

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<sup>23</sup> Prince describes three such codes: proairetic (code of actions), hermeneutic (code of enigmas) and symbolic code (1980: 228-30).

<sup>24</sup> Prince uses the following example to illustrate how metanarrative signs indicate which codes frame a section of the narrative: “Shirley, who had always been very cheerful, was crying all the time. This was a mystery.” Prince points out that the second sentence is a metanarrative sign because it explicitly indicates to the reader that this section of the narrative is framed by the hermeneutic code and, as such, Shirley’s behaviour is to be understood as mysterious (1982: 118).

<sup>25</sup> Prince explains how, for example, a narrator may cease to make metalinguistic statements (explanations of words or phrases) if the narrative is sufficiently readable without them (1982: 125).

<sup>26</sup> For example, a text may specifically answer a question concerning its component parts that a reader



the text effectively becomes a reader:

... a narrative text is partly constituted by the result of various reading operations it performs on itself (1980: 234)

The text can help a reader by reminding him or her of information or by pointing out that what appears to be conflicting data is not inconsistent with data already presented. Prince also adds that metanarrative signs can provide a commentary which makes the narrative more impenetrable. A text may allow only one correct answer to a given question and later modify an unequivocal answer, with the result that the reader's confidence in the narrator is undermined.

The formulation of Prince's narratological approach is dependent upon analysing the structure of narrative and the way in which each element combines to influence how a reader responds to a given narrative. The cultural codes function in a similar way to the interpretive strategies formulated by Fish's interpretive communities but likewise, Prince encounters a similar problem: it is not always the case that a reader of a given narrative will be immediately familiar with these codes. The codes on which Prince bases his view allow for variation between readers as long as they frame their own texts with their own codes but it is not clear how Prince can adequately account for the occurrence of reader and text from very different interpretive communities.

Smith encounters similar problems in the context of a discussion concerning classical Sanskrit poetry and the modern reader. He selects Ingalls as representative of the view that Sanskrit poets should not be judged by Western theories but "by the principles of mood and suggestion which they claimed to follow" (1982: 1). Smith challenges this claim with the opinion that "this underrates modern literary criticism and unduly flatters indigenous poetics":

Poeticians wrote for other poeticians rather than for poets, about poetics rather than about poetry. (1982: 2)

and he claims that whilst India has a poetics, it does not have literary criticism "as we understand it today". (1982: 2). Smith contends that the advantage of Western criticism is its "openness", by which it is at pains to give due credit to the poetry rather than the theory and its emphasis that there is no "final reading". Smith maintains that, by contrast, Sanskrit poetry is overlaid with theoretical prescriptions, creating obstacles to

its appreciation.<sup>27</sup> In effect, Smith is proposing to apply particular interpretive strategies to texts which were not constructed in a context shaped by these strategies. Smith is attempting to straddle two interpretive communities without acknowledging the circumstances of the texts' production in his own interpretive enterprise.

Obeyesekere adopts a similar approach and encounters similar problems. The availability of versions from elite and popular traditions, he argues, can be analysed to determine the "hidden discourse". By comparing episodes from the *Mahāvamsa* with the "folk tradition", Obeyesekere has demonstrated how the folk tradition can be used to elucidate early historical writing. Since several features of the *Mahāvamsa* account appear inconsistent, it is as though something is missing from the text or is assumed to be public knowledge. Obeyesekere calls this a "hidden discourse" which can be drawn out through interpretation (1989: 83). By examining how the story is outlined in other versions, it is possible to detect what information is taken for granted and to what extent each version suppresses or emphasizes certain aspects of the episode. For example, Obeyesekere discusses the episode in which Migāra's wife is beaten on the thigh. Obeyesekere notes that the *Mahāvamsa* account is at pains to establish her innocence but that this is not reflected in folk versions of the episode. The folk stories relate the adultery of Migāra's wife and how her liaison was discovered. Obeyesekere suspects that by insisting that she was blameless, it is as though the *Mahāvamsa* account is designed "to set the official record straight", largely motivated by the desire to portray Migāra as consistently cruel to reinforce its condemnation of Kāśyapa who ordered the assassination of his father, Dhātusena, by Migāra. In this enterprise, the *Mahāvamsa* assumes a discourse known to its audience. In effect:

Not only is there a story but there is also a controversy or debate about the story so that there exists versions from different vantage points. (1989: 83)<sup>28</sup>

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may be asking him- or herself and may answer it quickly or slowly. Similarly, it may supply new information, rendering the reader's previous answers invalid (1980: 230).

<sup>27</sup> However, Smith later modifies this view, acknowledging elsewhere that *rasa* was the prime concern of mahākāvya poets:

It was the aesthetic concerns of court life, as distinct from ideological and political considerations, which led to concentration on the effects of literature on the audience rather than its own internal integrity. ... Plot and character were subjected to the demands of the propriety of emotional effect. (1992: 35)

<sup>28</sup> Obeyesekere adds that there are some uncontroversial features of the narrative, such as the murder of Kāśyapa's father and his suicide: these events are "so firmly planted in Sinhala consciousness" (1989: 91) that they provoke very little debate. This rather vague assertion offers Obeyesekere a less hazardous line of investigation in terms of methodological approach, whereby material is regarded in terms of dominant or recurring themes and motifs and thereby bypasses the difficulties of chronology in relation to an oral tradition, since Obeyesekere appears to presume that the oral tradition remains unchanged:

But it is not unlikely that some of the folk stories that we collected came from a similar

For Obeyesekere, the “hidden discourse” of the *Mahāvamsa* is the controversy surrounding the question of human sacrifice, suppressed by the *Mahāvamsa* but revealed by referring to the folk tradition.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear how essential to Obeyesekere’s argument is the presence of more than one version of the story in order to ascertain what is not being discussed:

Not all stories give all the details; there is some discourse that is hidden in each. But one story helps to surface the discourse hidden in the other. (1989: 90)

and Obeyesekere’s approach illustrates the significance of Biardeau’s stress on preserving the plurality of versions and recensions, rather than a single text. Yet Obeyesekere is not making any original claims for the way in which a popular tradition preserves different perspectives on a given event from that of an elite tradition<sup>30</sup> and offers very little by way of a similar analysis of strategies of suppression and foregrounding employed in so-called popular traditions.<sup>31</sup> Obeyesekere’s approach is of great use in locating the context in which a text is produced, that of a debate. Equally important is the need to focus on the strategies utilized by texts to promote a particular interpretation and why such methods are adopted. It is this aspect of narrative, the way in which certain elements of events are put into the foreground whilst others are relegated to the sidelines, which is of great interest in identifying the interpretive strategies of a particular community in relation to its texts.

### Typologies of Framing (Reid)

The issue of how to overcome the dissonance between the hermeneutical strategies of different communities has emerged as a difficulty encountered in the work of the scholars described above. A possible solution to this problem is to be found in the

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tradition (oral or written) of edifying tales. (1989: 87)

<sup>29</sup> Obeyesekere argues that the *Mahāvamsa* suppresses those aspects which could be regarded as un-Buddhist, such as the debate on human sacrifice and reorients these in terms of a debate on *kamma* (1989: 85-6).

<sup>30</sup> Obeyesekere’s use of “folk stories” and “oral tradition” is neither clear nor consistent. Not all folk traditions are primarily oral and, more often than not, folk traditions preserve another form of the elite view (Indradeva 1969), whereas the oral tradition can either preserve or subvert the elite perspective (Ramanujan 1991; Raheja and Gold 1994).

<sup>31</sup> In consequence, Obeyesekere’s account betrays a rhetorical bias in favour of the folk tradition:

This “hidden discourse” can be brought to the surface by an examination of folk stories which not only clarifies the historical text *but also renders it alive and interesting*. The *Mahāvamsa* becomes a richer text for our new knowledge of the human sacrifice. (1989: 90 emphasis added; cf. p. 89)



work of Reid, who offers an approach combining framing processes with aspects of the text which direct the reader's understanding. To this end, he argues for a position which marries narrative theory and exchange theory. Reid perceives both areas as characterized by old debates. On Reid's assessment, exchange theory generally still evaluates transactions in terms of calculable benefit rather than exploring the dynamics of power relationships and motivations in exchanges. He declares that narratology has still not relinquished aspects of classical structuralism in order to explore the way in which texts engage readers (1992: 39);<sup>32</sup>

Narrative theory, for its part, needs now to proceed beyond the early narratological agenda, to investigate more fully not only the pragmatics of storytelling as a relationship between communicants but also the textual devices that work against any fixed framework of exchange. (1992: 3)

Essential to understanding Reid's model of a textual exchange is to view it as more than just a two-way transaction between text and reader but as dependent upon how the participants apply frames to the exchange:

The application of framing operations enables a text of a certain type to be recognized as such by situating it in relation to other types of texts. (1988: 34)

These framing procedures fix the terms of a narrative exchange. To explain this process, Reid has developed a fourfold typology of framing (1992: 44-57). Some framing factors are already provided, such as title, chapter headings. Such aspects of the physical format through which the text is presented is part of what Reid designates "circumtextual framing". Other examples include the publisher's details, any dedication and acknowledgements, the title page, type of binding and quality of paper. Reid emphasizes that these features are not to be understood as indicating an exact boundary: they enclose a piece of text but in such a way that a reader cannot always be certain where the text ends and its surroundings begin. These factors will influence the way the reader apprehends the text. This is particularly striking when considering the example of a text which appears "in the original" and translated into another language. Ostensibly, both are editions of the same text but they will have different circumtextual frames: the translation will undoubtedly contain an introduction by the translator and the original may appear in a series of similar pieces selected by an editor who has been

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<sup>32</sup> Reid (1992: 7, 11) cites, as influential in formulating his theory, the work of Bourdieu in regarding structures of exchange as characterized by temporal sequences and conflict and Bakhtin's work in reconceptualizing dialogue to include not only author and listener but also previous utterances, creating "intertextual (or dialogical) relations" (cited in Todorov 1984: 48).

commissioned by a publishing house.

In addition to the physical situation of the text's presentation is the framing constituted by any kind of information, expectation or preoccupation that a reader employs in the interpretive process. These are presented as largely negative convictions by Reid: "rigid notions about literary genres", "prejudice, whether fully conscious or not, about what counts as literary value" (1992: 47). Reid concedes that a degree of arbitrariness generated by the extratextual framing of a particular reader's engagement with a particular text is unavoidable and once more a charge of subjectivism can be levelled. However, like Fish, he counters that this singularity is not "capriciously personal" but is the result of "institutionalised reading practices" (1992: 46). Like Fish, Reid attributes most disagreements between readers to extratextual framing, since "it can encompass a multitude of variable preconceptions as well as different degrees and sorts of cultural learning" (1992: 46). This is a more all-embracing conceptualization than Fish's generic "interpretive communities" or Graham's explanation of disagreements over the nature of scripture (1987a: 5), since the element of subjectivity, modified by the collective decision as to what constitutes a piece of text, enables Reid to account for differences which arise not only between but also within interpretive communities.

Framing factors also occur within texts. Reid defines intratextual framing as any component of a text that can suddenly alter a reader's mode of apprehending it (1992: 48f). This type of framing can be determined directly from the pages of the text, such as paragraph breaks or sections. It can also take a non-graphic form, such as blank spaces or illustrations or involve a stylistic change. Reid also specifies heightened forms of intratextual framing, in particular, the embedded tale, which functions reflexively, in that it serves to comment explicitly on the text enclosing it. Other heightened forms of intratextual framing are descriptive passages or repeated phrases.

The fourth type of framing proposed by Reid is intertextual framing which is constituted by oblique references to characters, situations from other texts. Reid contends that rather than a matter of simple allusion or adaptation, intertextual framing indicates the way in which the reader is to understand how the text is to be seen in relation to other texts:

Intertextuality works through devices by which a text signals how its very structure of signification depends on both similarity to and difference from certain other types of text, thus modifying a previous discursive system. (1992: 51)

Reid suggests that this does not involve the replacement of one text by referring to

another but rather that the two texts serve almost as discourse and meta-discourse. This, however, presupposes the probability of the reader's familiarity with such a reference but Reid does not discuss this implication, although the significance of such a recognition is stressed by others.<sup>33</sup> Intertextuality is a potentially useful device in terms of the commentarial enterprise, since it could be argued that a commentary by definition modifies the meaning of the text upon which it is commenting. However, the modification occurs in the reader's perception of the texts involved and does not necessarily result in a radical change but could serve equally effectively as a strategy to affirm or remind the reader of an interpretation already established. Reid observes that intratextual framing and the fourth type of framing, intertextual framing, are "often elusive, and sometimes hardly evident at all" (1992: 47). However, intertextual framing need not always be oblique or elusive. Pāli commentarial texts often display explicit instances of intertextual framing and as such could be construed as an explicit example of the process of definition of the canon as understood by the interpretive community to which the commentary is aligned.

Of the four types of framing, Reid states that extratextual framing is predominant, since it serves as a trigger for the other three:

... this draws on the range of general knowledge and expectations that a reader needs in order to activate those other three sorts of framing ... (1992: 54)

In order to elucidate his model, Reid is obliged to differentiate the framing types quite sharply but in practical terms, it is the case that the types of framing overlap, in the sense that whilst preconceptions may initiate framing procedures, extratextual framing is not separable from the other three. For example, a reader will frame a manuscript differently from a volume of translated text. This involves both circumtextual framing and extratextual framing but it is not clear which comes first in this process and readers will not necessarily make these distinctions consciously. A passage from the work of Graham provides a convenient example:

Even in the specific domain of scripture, not only the oral, but also the overtly physical aspects of sacred books have not been given their due. A nonreductionist study of the uses of the written or printed text — the bound volume, the calligraphed scroll, the illuminated page, the scriptural amulet, the phylactery, the prayer-wheel — could shed considerable light on the functional nature of scripture. (1987a: 164)

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<sup>33</sup> Carruthers has investigated the connection between text, memory and morality in medieval culture. She analyses a textual example of an individual, who recalls by quotation a specific instance of ethical action and applies it to a present situation (1990: 179f). Carruthers argues that for the present action to be considered ethical, the piece of text must be common to subject and audience: if the audience does not recognize the quotation, the scene loses its ethical significance (1990: 181).

By identifying the physical features of texts as significance in formulating a notion of scripture (circumtextual framing), he reveals a particular preconception of his interpretive community (extratextual framing).

The overlap in the framing typology is particularly evident between intratextual and intertextual framing. A reference to another text will bring that text into reader's mind (intertextual framing) but will also alter the reader's mode of apprehension of the present discourse as a result (intratextual framing). Reid's view of intertextuality generates another sharp differentiation in the formulation of his typology. It appears to imply a sense of textual progression is necessary, namely that intertextuality derives from a "previous discourse", thereby modifying the present one. However, this view of intertextuality may preclude a corpus of literature which does not attribute textual development in quite the same way.

Whilst Reid stresses the role of the reader in framing texts, like Fish, he expresses the reader's activity in terms of composing the text:

For reading, too, is a craft of composition, a practice of frame-making that overlaps with the artist's creative labour. By bringing interpretive frames to bear on a text, its reader actively draws its elements into a significant configuration. (1992: 16)

and thus lessens the possibility of deducing from a text at least how the text, as a product of a particular interpretive community, is framed extratextually by examining the kind of preoccupations or preconceptions the text displays.

Framing a text in these ways fixes the rate of textual exchange but, as Reid further explains, this process is complicated by other factors, which can prevent the completion of framing activity or initiate the renegotiation of terms of the exchange. In the case of written narrative, one factor which can disturb the framing process is the capacity of the text to rearrange its figures to increase the range of possibilities of narrative development and is designated by Reid as "substitution". Substitution occurs when one figure replaces another generating the need for further narration to account for the apparent discrepancy. The notion of substitution is predicated on Reid's conception of narrative movement as produced rhetorically rather than through plottable action:

... arbitrary substitution rather than interlinking of events is what produces the momentum. Instead of the bonds of causality, instead of entailment, there is just an alternation from one component story ... to the other ... or a superimposition of one upon the other. (1992: 89)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Reid argues strongly against what he calls the "actionist orthodoxy", the view that narrative represents a succession of events or "action sequences". Reid's position is that narratives represent



This does not result in a text which is disjointed or fragmented. Reid argues that concealing the operation of narrative sequencing, which is essentially substitutive rather than chronological, enables the text to appear cohesive and continuous (1992: 81). This is achieved if the narratorial voice and sequence are closely conjoined:

But it should be obvious that neither linked events nor patterned figures *per se* can guarantee an effect of coherence, for this depends ultimately on the reader's framing of the 'text as a whole', and it is through the pervasive influence of a seemingly homogeneous attitudinal 'voice' that a reader is likely to be persuaded, if at all, to regard events as conjunctive or figures as isotopic. (1992: 125)

When one figure is replaced by another then another, leading to a seeming endless substitutive pattern, the narrator's role may be taken over by another narrator, effecting a shift in the balance of narratorial control. Reid regards this as another destabilising feature of narrative, which he calls "dispossession", the means by which control over the side of the story at the centre of the reader's attention is shifted between narrators in a text. For Reid, it is necessary for there to be one voice which predominates in a text for the story to advance:

On the face of it, monologue is an axiomatic precondition of narrative, though not its sole or sufficient property. A narrator speaks, and the storytelling can proceed only for as long as interlocutors and rival narrators keep silent. Their part in a possible dialogue must be silenced in order that a single voice may be heard in the narrative mode. (1992: 80)

Control of the narratorial voice is retained if attempts by rival narrators to usurp control can be fended off.<sup>35</sup>

Reid illustrates his theory by utilizing examples from a wide range of literature. He considers the importance of a schema to be applicable to texts of different genres, from other times, cultures and "non-canonical" texts:

What of narrative in other times and places: do medieval and postmodern texts alike, and African and Australian and Icelandic, also 'trade in the manipulation of desire' (or in anything else), and if so how are their different discursive contexts registered and framed? What of genres other than the novel and short story — say a mythic tale, or an autobiographical poem? What of fictions that have not been institutionalised as 'literature' ... (1992: 33)

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events as successive: events are linked together artificially to give the appearance of movement (1992: 24). This will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

<sup>35</sup> This is explored in more detail in Chapter Five.



and he discusses examples from the Western literary canon as well as one example of a non-western writer and a text from outside the "literary canon". In doing so, he tends to focus his discussion on the way in which the structures of narrative shape the way a reader apprehends a text rather than analysing authorial intent.<sup>36</sup> This is largely due to his view of the reader's role in composing the text through the application of framing procedures. The shift from author to narrator generates an interesting corollary. If the focus rests upon the way in which a reader's understanding is directed by a text rather than an author, then this appears to "animate" the text by attributing some agency to it.<sup>37</sup> Reid appears to be aware of this and would perhaps counter that this is true only in so far as a reader apprehends a text: since the reader is integrally involved in the production of textual meaning, then it is the reader who "animates" the text by implying an author. According to Reid, a reader constructs an "implied" author only if there is a close connection between voice and sequence and this should not obscure the role of the reader of responsibility in the construction of the text. An advantage of emphasising the narratorial rather than the authorial is that there is less temptation to construct an historical figure called "the author". As a consequence, the hermeneutical enterprise is not inhibited or abandoned simply because the author(s) is unknown and this is particularly instructive when analysing texts for which there is uncertainty as to the author's identity.

However hard a reader tries to fix the terms of the textual exchange by applying framing factors, this is frustrated by the movements of substitution and dispossession and Reid acknowledges that substitutive and dispossessive patterns of a narrative can render textual meaning unstable:

Because signs are endlessly substitutable, textual meaning is always apt to slip its tether; and because the narrator's role may be in principle be taken over by another narrator, there is further potential for instability, which may also be generically troublesome. (1992: 50)

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<sup>36</sup> It can be argued that the postulation of an author's intended meaning is highly relevant in the context of examining commentarial texts, since the process of commentary itself could be viewed in this way. However, the meaning that the author of a text intended is highly elusive and the attempt to discover it, problematic (see Eagleton 1983: 66f).

<sup>37</sup> I am indebted to Keith Whitelam for this observation. Reid appears to be aware of this and, in offering an evaluation of the work of Chambers, Reid points out the way in which Chambers attributes quasi-personified and seemingly autonomous agency to a text (1992: 33). The issue of textual animation is magnified in the work of Prince. Prince asserts that a narrative text is constituted by the result of various reading operations it performs on itself, in the way that it can help or hinder a reader identify the codes which frame a narrative section through metanarrative signs. In the explication of his model, Prince tends to focus his attention on the role of the text rather than the reader.

If it is important that a narrative text promote a particular interpretation, then the implications of inherently unstable textual meaning are considerable. For example, if the commentarial enterprise is understood as fixing the meaning of a text, this presupposes stable textual meaning: using a narrative form for this then becomes problematic. However, if a wider view of commentary is developed, which shifts the focus away from meaning to the construction of meaning, then a great deal more can be gleaned from such examples of textual instability.

## CONCLUSION

Some trends in the study of narrative and religious literature have been discussed above and some of the drawbacks in relation to the theories have been highlighted. It has been shown that the reduction of narrative to a purely mimetic quality or didactic function is problematic. Rather than comprehensive explanations of the role of narrative in religious literature, both constitute a reductionist view of narrative, which is largely determined by particular interpretive preoccupations.

Graham's definition of scripture, emphasizing its relational qualities, reorients the study of religious literature to acknowledge the important role that a community plays in the formulation of its sacred texts. Yet the interaction between text and community is more symmetrical than Graham's response of the faithful to their sacred texts suggests. Graham's definition needs to be augmented by the recognition that elements within religious texts, particularly those texts which appear in a narrative form, are constructed to influence the way in which an interpretive community responds to its sacred texts. There are strategies incorporated into the texts by which the texts are to be interpreted. Prince and Iser have identified some of the elements of narrative designed to direct the response of the reader but the nature of this response remains elusive. Iser characterizes the response to narrative as aesthetic. The presence of an aesthetic response is dependent upon the status of the text as indeterminate. Those texts which promote a single rather than multiple perspectives are not indeterminate and thus would fail to evoke such a response according to Iser's theory. This either disqualifies many religious texts which are not indeterminate or it indicates that the response to the text is not always an aesthetic one.

Many of the drawbacks discussed in relation to the theories above are resolved on Reid's model. Reid's typology of framing provides a comprehensive and workable explanation of the relationship between reader and text and the reading process. The reader applies frames to a text as part of the interpretative enterprise. Some of these

frames are provided in the text itself (such as the form of the text's presentation) and this has the effect of limiting how the text can be interpreted. In this way, the position argued for is neither relativist, where any possible reading is valid, nor is only a single reading proposed.

The importance of acknowledging the role of both the text and the reader in the production of a text mitigates against the problem of attempting to straddle two interpretive communities. A slight modification to Reid's formulation of extratextual framing encompasses not only the preconceptions and expectations of the reader but also those incorporated into the text itself. Intertextual framing reveals how a text is to be understood in relation to other texts. This is a somewhat less problematic explanation for parallels and similarities between narratives than the idea of a "hidden discourse", proposed by Obeyesekere, simply because it acknowledges that the form in which the narratives are presented determines how material is related, rather than speculating on links with an amorphous "folk tradition". Reid situates his analysis in the structure of the narrative itself, where he identifies mechanisms which confirm or subvert the reader's apprehension of text. Reid's typology begins to establish a realistic method to examine the role of narrative in religious literature.

## CHAPTER TWO

CANON AND COMMENTARYINTRODUCTION

In 1928, Malalasekera pondered the impossibility of ascertaining the resemblance between the corpus of texts collected and written down at the Aluvihāra Council and that which exists today. The difficulty stems from the lack of Pāli manuscripts which have survived from this time. Indeed, von Hinüber has noted that few palm leaf manuscripts have survived from before the eighteenth century CE (1983: 76) and that the date proposed for oldest manuscript known so far is possibly the beginning of fifteenth century. However, this has not prevented scholars from making some grand claims. Collins confidently asserts that the extant form of the Pāli Canon must date from the time of Buddhaghosa (1990: 96) and Norman agrees, adding the view that the form of the Canon was actually determined by Buddhaghosa and other commentators (1989: 42).

Undoubtedly, a process of textualization<sup>1</sup> has taken place and arguably, the acquisition of commentary and gloss describes the way in which Pāli texts gained a fixed form and content. Predictably, the distinction between text and commentary is more a preoccupation of the Commentaries. Collins (1990: 91) relates how the term *pāli*, which has come to denote a scriptural language, originally meant “text” and its occurrence in connection with *aṭṭhakathā*, “commentary”, has led to the obvious conclusion that *pāli* must therefore indicate “canon”. Collins adds a modification to this view, in which he suggests that the juxtaposition of these terms is designed to distinguish *pāli*, meaning “the precise wording of a text”, from the more open-ended *aṭṭhakathā*, “saying what it means”.<sup>2</sup> All the references to this pairing cited by Collins are taken from the Commentaries, indicating perhaps that such considerations were more of a preoccupation in these texts and vindicating Norman’s assertion that the extant texts have been constructed by the commentators. The implications of this view are considerable. It suggests that, in the Pāli context, the Commentaries play a major role in shaping the corpus of literature and, as a consequence, some of the assumptions

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<sup>1</sup> Carruthers (1990: 12) notes the presence of a community in this process.

<sup>2</sup> Collins (1990: 91-2) includes a comprehensive list of variations on this type of pairing: *pāli-vañṇanā* (text-commentary), *pada-vañṇanā* (word-commentary), *vinicchaya-kathā* (exegesis) and *aṭṭha-vañṇanā* (explanation of the meaning), suggesting a variety in the kinds of commentary undertaken.



commonly held concerning the relationship between canon and commentary need to be re-examined.

The Pāli Canon is conventionally described as being divided into three “baskets” (*piṭaka*), or collections of texts, namely *Vinaya*, *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma*. The source of this particular arrangement can be traced to references in the texts themselves: individuals are described as “knowing the Three Baskets by heart” (*tipiṭakadhara*)<sup>3</sup> and accounts of a series of convocations of the Saṅgha record the formation of the Canon. Together, these instances are commonly regarded as confirmations of the compilation of the Canon and its formation into the “Three Baskets”. The consensus of scholarly opinion attributes the establishment of the Canon to a Council held at Rājagaha. Gombrich is fairly convinced of the trustworthiness of the Pāli sources:

Soon after the Buddha’s death five hundred senior monks — as the tradition has it — assembled in Rājagaha and rehearsed his teachings together; this is plausibly claimed to be how the Canon originated. (1988: 128)

and Geiger is of a similar opinion:

According to tradition, which on essential points is probably quite dependable, its compilation began immediately after the death of the Buddha about 483 B. C., at the council of Rājagaha. (1978: 9)

whereas Skilton is more sceptical:

Traditions vary as to the number of these, and much modern thinking upon them has been (perhaps unduly) influenced by the picture presented in the accounts preserved, and sometimes written, by the conservative Theravādin School. (1994: 45)

The primary source cited by Skilton and Geiger is the *Cullavagga*.<sup>4</sup> The *Cullavagga* account does indeed make reference to the recital of the discipline and the teaching at Rājagaha but whether this event can then be regarded as the compilation of the Canon is arguable and care must be taken not to construe the establishment of the content of the Pāli Canon from this text. The reason for caution becomes apparent once a comparison between canonical and commentarial accounts of the Rājagaha Council is made.

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<sup>3</sup> Schopen (1988-99) cites evidence from Kuṣān inscriptions, which describes individual donors of images as “trepiṭakas”.

<sup>4</sup> Vin ii 284f. Geiger is the only one to mention accounts in the chronicles. Gombrich does not cite any specific sources.



### THE COUNCIL AT RĀJAGAHA

In Pāli literature, there are at least three accounts of a meeting of the Buddhist community,<sup>5</sup> convened at Rājagaha during the first rainy season after the parinibbāna of the Buddha and the following details are presented. Five hundred monks are selected by Kassapa to meet and verify the understanding of what constituted the teaching and monastic discipline. Two elders, Upāli and Ānanda are questioned on matters of the discipline and the teaching respectively and the resultant “text” is repeated by the assembled company. It is not therefore surprising to find this event commonly assumed as establishing the content of the Pāli Canon:

The historicity of the Rajagaha Council has been generally accepted, and the purpose of the Council was to prepare an authoritative corpus of ‘texts’ embodying the Buddha’s enunciations on the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*. (Gokhale 1994: 26)

However, in the *Cullavagga*, the canonical account, there is no explicit statement to this effect.<sup>6</sup> In *Cullavagga*, only the chanting of the discipline is mentioned at the end of the account:

Now because five hundred monks—not one more—were at this chanting of the discipline, this chanting of the discipline is in consequence called ‘that of the Five Hundred.’ (BD V 405)

It is largely incidental to this account that the recitation of these rules constitute a “text”. What is of crucial importance is establishing that each rule of monastic discipline was promulgated at a specific time and place by the Buddha. After the monks have assembled, the *Cullavagga* account continues with a stylized description of the question and answer procedure.<sup>7</sup> The setting, subject-matter and individual concerned in each rule is established, beginning with the four *Pārājika*:

Then the venerable Kassapa the Great questioned the venerable Upāli as to the subject of the first offence involving defeat and he questioned him as to its provenance and he questioned him as to the individual and he questioned him as to what was laid down and he questioned him as to what was further laid down

<sup>5</sup> Vin ii 284-93; Mhv 16-19; Sp 1-30.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the commentary on the *Cullavagga* account consists of some glosses and then the reader is referred to the *Bāhiranidāna* (Sp 1296-7).

<sup>7</sup> The formal procedure is detailed in the *Mahāvamsa* (Mhv III 31-7). These details do not appear in the *Cullavagga* account.

and he questioned him as to what was an offence and he questioned him as to what was no offence. (BD V 396)

Kassapa questions Upāli in a particular way. He asks him where, about whom and about what the various rules of training were instituted. It is only after the authenticity of the rule has been established by associating it directly with the Buddha, that reference is made to the content. In the same way, Kassapa questions Ānanda about the teaching by asking him to state the location and addressee of individual discourses pronounced by the Buddha. However, there is no indication that the content of each discourse is repeated. Having considered the nature of the questioning, the significance of the *Cullavagga* account of the Rājagaha Council becomes apparent: it lies in the detailing of the location and source of each discourse and monastic rule. What is being established is the association of a particular store of material directly with the Buddha and this becomes clearer after considering the framing narrative of the account. In the *Cullavagga*, the account of the Council proceedings is prefaced by an episode, in which a monk called Subhadda<sup>8</sup> makes the announcement that since the Buddha had passed into nibbāna, the monks may do as they please:

‘Enough, your reverences, do not grieve, do not lament, we are well rid of this great recluse. We were worried when he said: “This is allowable to you, this is not allowable to you.” But now we will be able to do as we like and we won’t do what we don’t like.’ (BD V 394)

By propounding an alternative vinaya, Subhadda was threatening to undermine the claims to legitimacy of the monastic community.<sup>9</sup> Effectively, it is Subhadda’s challenge to the authority of the Buddha which precipitates the convocation. Skilton argues for a different view of the account:

The First Council is important because it shows the early Saṅgha trying to organize itself, and establish its own identity and continuity, with a definitive body of discourses and regulations, its own Dharma and Vinaya. In particular the incident with Subhadra suggests there was some need to unify the Saṅgha on a basis other than the charismatic figure of the Buddha. (1994: 46)

Whilst the *Cullavagga* account of the Rājagaha Council appears to presuppose that the discipline and teaching had a form already, as particular rules are named and individual

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<sup>8</sup> According to Jayawickrama (1962: 102 n3/6), this Subhadda is different from the last person of the same name to become a follower of the Buddha (D ii 148).

<sup>9</sup> In terms of Reid’s narrative theory, Subhadda is a potential rival narrator and his challenge represents a bid for control of the narratorial voice.

*nikāya* are mentioned, since the text does not give the full detail of each individual part of the body of texts intoned, this suggests that according to the *Cullavagga*, the purpose of the Council was not to fix the content of “the Canon”. What is recited is not the text of “the Canon” in the form of the *Tipiṭaka*,<sup>10</sup> since it seems that this is not strictly speaking in dispute. If the account is viewed in terms of its framing narrative, that of Subhadda’s challenge, then there is considerable justification in interpreting the account of the Rājagaha Council as an attempt to affirm a particular set of texts as those directly connected with the Buddha. Further evidence for this view is evinced in the *Cullavagga* by the acknowledgement of the existence of at least one other possible recension of the canon, as is indicated by the inclusion of the episode involving Purāṇa and his company of five hundred monks. Purāṇa is informed that the discipline and teaching have been recited and repeated by Kassapa and his company but he prefers to follow the way that he heard it in the presence of the Buddha:

“Your reverences, well chanted by the elders are dhamma and discipline, but in the way that I heard it in the Lord’s presence, that I received it in his presence, in that same way will I bear it in mind.” (Vin ii 290)

The inclusion of the episode involving Purāṇa serves to underline the threat posed by Subhadda to the claim that the discipline and teaching were instituted by the Buddha. By contrast, Purāṇa presents no threat since he is not attempting to establish a recension without a basis of authority from the Buddha. As such, he is left to his own devices and he plays no further part in the *Cullavagga* account of the Rājagaha Council. No comment is made upon the authenticity of Purāṇa’s version of the discipline and teaching. The episode ends abruptly and the narrative returns to the Council proceedings. It is suggested that the account of formation of canon in the *Cullavagga* is not about fixing a canon as a set of texts *per se* but rather about the issue of authority in the context of a dispute generated by Subhadda.

### The Oral Tradition

*Saṅgiti*, meaning “recitation”, is usually translated as “council” or “convocation”. The PED definition (proclamation, rehearsal, general convocation of the Buddhist clergy in order to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the Scriptures) reflects a general assumption, both explicit and implicit, that the recitation by the assembled

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<sup>10</sup> The *Cullavagga* account makes no reference to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. Accounts which include this set of texts at the first council are, as Norman points out, clearly anachronistic (1989: 30 n5).

company of monks constitutes the fixing of the text of the canon. However, it is only in commentarial accounts, such as the *Mahāvamsa* and *Bāhiranidāna*, that there are unambiguous references to the rehearsal of *vinaya* and *dhamma*:

Sitting in the thera's chair, [Mahākassapa] asked [Upāli] the questions touching the vinaya; and Upāli, seated in the preacher's chair, expounded (the matter). And as this best master of the vinaya expounded each (clause) in turn *all (the bhikkhus) knowing the custom, repeated the vinaya after him*. Then the thera (Mahākassapa) taking (the task) upon himself questioned concerning the dhamma, him the chief of those who had most often heard (the word), him the treasure-keeper of the Great Seer (the Buddha); and the thera Ānanda, taking (the task) upon himself, taking his seat in the preacher's chair, expounded the whole dhamma. And *all the (theras) knowing all that was contained in the doctrine repeated the dhamma in turn after the sage of the Videha country*. Thus in seven months was that compiling of the dhamma to save the whole world completed by those (theras) bent on the whole world's salvation. (Geiger 1912: 17-18; emphasis added)

Scholars claim that once the different portions of the teaching had been allocated to the guardianship of an expert (the *Vinaya* collection was given to Upāli and his pupils and the *Dīghanikāya* to Ānanda and his pupils), there eventually developed a system of reciters for each portion of the Canon<sup>11</sup> and this is then construed as evidence for the beginning of the oral transmission of the Canon. Indeed, there are indications in the *Vinayaṭṭakā* which would support this view.<sup>12</sup> There have been several recent studies on the oral nature of the Pāli Canon which include an examination of the reciter (*bhāṇaka*) system.<sup>13</sup> Norman (1989: 33) is of the view that the collection of the Buddha's teaching took place during his lifetime as well as after his death and was made on the basis of length, with each set allocated to group of monks for transmission to pupils. Norman (1989: 33-4) deduces from the variations in one version of a discourse in different parts of the Canon that, whilst *bhāṇaka* schools were independent, at the same time one school was not more authentic. It seems that reciters had views on the form of texts and the formation of canon and disagreed about the order in which the texts were to be arranged.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Norman (1989: 34)

<sup>11</sup> Again, this is not a feature of the *Cullavagga* account, although elsewhere the text does seem to be aware of a division according to expertise. Dabba the Mallian, in assigning lodgings to a group of monks, divides them according to their specializations: he puts the *Suttantika* monks together so that they can chant together, the *Vinayadhara* monks together to decide issues of *vinaya*, the *Dhammakathika* monks together to discuss the teaching and the meditator monks together so that they will not be disturbed (Vin ii 74-75).

<sup>12</sup> *Vinaya* material is divided into recitation sections (*bhāṇavāra*), for example, Vin iii 33, 78 et passim.

<sup>13</sup> For example: Collins (1992a); Cousins (1983); Hoffman (1992).

<sup>14</sup> For example, *Dīghabhāṇakas* include the *Khuddakanikāya* under the Abhidhamma (Jayawickrama 1962: 100 n20/2). Jayawickrama also notes how some Sarvāstivāda schools divided *sutta* into four



proposes that reciters did not merely chant texts but added to their allocations. However, Norman points out that references to reciters themselves occur in commentarial texts. He suggests that increase in the use of writing rendered the *bhāṇaka* system superfluous:

Buddhaghosa refers to *bhāṇakas* as though they were still active in his day, but they seem not to exist today, at least not in Ceylon. The growth in the practice of writing and the increasing use of manuscripts probably made it unnecessary to keep up the schools of *bhāṇakas*. (1989: 33 n27)

However, Norman contends, the Canon was not fixed absolutely by process of writing it down. According to the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvamsa*,<sup>15</sup> monks in Sri Lanka, who had memorized the *Tipiṭaka* and commentaries, now transcribed them into books. Malalasekera has some justification in arguing that the accounts of this event in the chronicles are “an exaggeration” and he cites evidence to indicate that writing was in existence in Sri Lanka before the reign of Vaṭṭagāmiṇī (1994: 44-5). He suggests that it is unlikely that the Sinhalese commentaries were transmitted orally because the structure of the texts does not permit this. Hence, he concludes the Aluvihāra Council was an attempt to impose homogeneity on the collection of texts:

It may be that in Vaṭṭagāmiṇī’s [sic] time they were still unarranged, rare, imperfect and full of inaccuracies, as even now in manuscripts. At Alu-vihāra the text was rehearsed and commentaries revised and distributed. (1994: 45)

Norman attributes this to the effects of famine, war and the power of the Abhayagiri vihāra, favoured by Vaṭṭagāmiṇī. The number of Mahāvihāra monks declined to such an extent that it was not viable for the old system of reciters to continue (1989: 37). Collins argues that, while it seems that social and political conditions were indeed uncertain, the primary motivation to record the Canon and Commentaries in writing was due to the rivalry between these two monastic houses and the Mahāvihāra perception that their position as “sole legitimate custodians of Buddhism” was at stake (1990: 98). Norman is puzzled that such a system of reciting and approving sutta form at the series of Councils, which should have resulted in the elimination of all variations, still permitted variant readings, recorded by commentators, showing that somehow tradition

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*āgamas* and how this is recognised by Buddhaghosa (Sv i 2) and also reflected in Dpv iv 16: (They divided into) Vaggas (groups—D.), Paṇṇāsakas (groups of fifties—M.), Saṃyuttas (kindred topics—S.), and Nipātas (section—A) and compiled the Piṭaka of Āgamas designated as Sutta. (Jayawickrama 1962: 99 n15/9).

<sup>15</sup> *Dīpavaṃsa* XX 20-1, *Mahāvamsa* XXXIII 100-1. Other Sinhalese chronicles state that the Canon was fixed in writing at the Aluvihāra Council, convened under the auspices of Aśoka (Norman 1989: 37).

kept alive readings presumably not approved. Norman ventures to suggest a possible explanation on the grounds that scribes remembered older “unapproved” readings and reintroduced them into texts in the course of copying them out. In this connection, Norman has commented on the nature of differing versions as a result of the *bhāṇaka* system, where, for example, the canonical tradition of one sect agrees with the commentarial tradition of another:

This suggests that, in some cases at least, both the canonical and the commentarial reading are of great antiquity, both perhaps going back to the time of the Buddha. This may mean that in the early Buddhist community both readings were of equal validity, so that it was a matter of chance which sect or school chose what as their canonical reading. (Norman 1989: 51)

An alternative view is offered by Collins (1992a: 125). He argues that by the time of the Commentaries, the use of writing had become more widespread and, as a consequence, there was a shift in emphasis from textual transmission to public recitation amongst the groups of reciters.<sup>16</sup> The variety of “Canons” constructed by the reciters supports the view that texts were compiled into lists primarily for the purposes of recitation and texts existed in different recensions. If this is the case, then in the commentaries, it can be argued that there is nothing more significant in the collection and arrangement of the texts into three “baskets” than for the purposes of recitation. If the organisation into *piṭaka* is designed for the purposes of oral recitation, then this casts doubt on the idea that canon in Buddhist terms implies some sort of closed list of “foundational documents”,<sup>17</sup> designed to preserve the texts in a fixed form.

Other research into the oral transmission of canonical material focuses upon discerning the features of canonical literature which indicate an origin in the oral tradition.<sup>18</sup> However, many of these contributions to this aspect of Pāli literature draw

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<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as Collins notes elsewhere (1990: 92), *piṭaka* is a term as “colourless” as *āgama* or *saṃhitā* and this may explain why it is used perjoratively in canonical texts, where text-based knowledge is regarded as inferior to personal spiritual experience and knowledge, a view also propounded in the Commentaries.

<sup>17</sup> Collins draws a distinction between two types of canon. The first he designates as “scripture” (a body of texts oral and written that assigns authority and is not closed) and the second he describes as a closed list of “foundational documents”. It is his contention that the Pāli Canon is of the second type (1990: 90).

<sup>18</sup> Brough analyses the way the phrase “*evam me sutaṃ*” is punctuated and concludes that its significance lies in the way it is used by the early followers of the Buddha to demonstrate a direct association with the Buddha through personal testimony (1949-50: 424). In a wide-ranging discussion, Hoffman (1992) also examines the “*evam me sutaṃ*” phrase and the implications of postulating an origin for the Pāli Canon in the oral tradition. Collins (1992a) explores the nature of public recitation in early Buddhism. He draws attention to a recitation sequence with four stages: a sermon, probably a *Jātaka* story by the day-preacher, followed by recitation by the *padabhāṇaka* or *sarabhāṇaka*, succeeded by a commentary or sermon by the night-preacher (*rattikathika*) and another sermon by the dawn-preacher (*paccūsa-kathika*). Rahula (1956: 267-8) describes a recitation ceremony involving three

the distinction between the oral and written too sharply. The oral tradition is neither uniform nor static and, as a consequence, the pursuit of the oral origins of the Pāli canon becomes more complex.<sup>19</sup> Graham (1987b: 138) has drawn attention to a common misperception that the preservation of material by oral transmission resembles that of the folk oral tradition and he stresses that the oral transmission of scripture, which is sometimes more reliable than written texts, is different from the folk oral tradition, in which verbatim accuracy is not important. This feature is considered by Biardeau in the process of examining three types of oral literature.<sup>20</sup> An important feature of Biardeau's analysis is the emphasis she places on the role of those specially skilled to transmit the material, whether they be bards or brāhmans. In this context, the oral performance of the text is regarded as more significant than the written version. As Folkert comments:

... the Veda is not a book, strictly speaking. At best it is a missal, or hymnal; and most important, the Veda has no religious function as a book. The words of the Veda must be intoned to have any power in Hindu eyes: it is the words of the Veda that matters, not the written form. (1993: 87)

Written forms of texts are present within the Hindu tradition but they are not given primacy in the interpretative enterprise.<sup>21</sup> To narrow the focus of the debate to an attempt to reconstruct the "original features of the early texts" obscures the importance

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monks: the first, the "day preacher" (*divākathika*) recited the text, the second, the paraphraser (*padabhāṇaka*) into Sinhalese and the third gave a full exposition. Cousins identifies mnemonic formulae in discourses, which he concludes are "designed for chanting" (1983: 1).

<sup>19</sup> There has already been some review of oral theory amongst folklorists. Smith (1977) has pointed to a weakness in the "Oral Theory" proposed by Lord (*The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960). Lord assumed that all traditions of the sung epic adhere to same pattern (modelled on Yugoslav tradition). However, Smith contends that rather than the formulaic features of the epic indicating a lack of imagination, they are "the very building blocks of creative metrical composition." (1977: 147). Smith is effectively questioning Lord's conflation of "formulaic" and "improvisatory".

<sup>20</sup> Biardeau characterizes the Western oral tradition as the means by which popular beliefs and legends are transmitted by narrators, whose storytelling skills were the mark of their profession. Since verbatim accuracy is not a requirement for the transmission of material, the oral tradition as such is anonymous, collective and Biardeau considers that it is valued less than the written tradition. By contrast, the transmission of Vedic literature involves direct word for word transmission and the emphasis, according to Biardeau, is on the correct hearing and remembering of what is regarded as revealed literature. Those who transmit the texts are regarded as specially authorized to do so. The third variety of oral tradition considered by Biardeau includes any form of literature transmitted by oral recitation. Texts exist in different recensions and there are differences between two versions of the same recension (1968: 116-8).

<sup>21</sup> Sivaraman maintains that it is the relationship between the text and its performance which is important:

Writing is a secondary function and has no standing reference in the religious tradition whose hermeneutical task lies rather in reconstructing the relationship between text and speaking. (1977: 46)



of the role a community plays in the formulation of its scripture.

### THE NATURE OF CANON

Carpenter also draws attention to the way in which individuals and communities are involved in shaping notions of scripture. In describing the nature of Vedic canonicity as inextricably linked with the status of those who preserve it and use it, he concludes:

Canonicity then has more to do with formally correct usage in the socially correct context than it does with questions of ultimate origin or authorship, or with questions of limitation and closure. (1994: 31)

Carpenter here emphasizes the idea that the circumstances of the text's production play a role in determining the idea of canon, a point taken up by Cort. Having observed a diversity of ideas of canon to be found within the Jain community, Cort constructs a twofold typology to describe Jain scripture (1992: 173f). Using Geertzian terminology to adapt Folkert's twofold model, he suggests that the notions of "Canon-near" and "Canon-far"<sup>22</sup> serve to encompass the multiple, often loosely defined canons to be found within the Jain community.<sup>23</sup> Cort observes that there is a tendency for a lay Canon-near to possess more fluid boundaries, indicating a notion of canon, in which there is no single text but "microgenres of closely related texts" (1992: 185). Cort's typology allows for the variety of canons formulated within the Jain community whilst offering a viable method of description.

### "A Canon, One Amongst Others"

In the Pāli tradition, there is evidence to suggest that only parts of "the Canon" have ever had wide currency. Keyes has drawn attention to the evidence collected by Finot

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<sup>22</sup> Cort stresses that the categories should be understood as ideal types rather than as existing as such within the Jain community. Cort describes how the form of Canon-near text is determined by the role it plays in a particular context. Authority is attributed to a Canon-far text on the basis of a perceived inherent value of the text itself (1992: 175). Graham offers a similar twofold division, which he describes as "first order" and "second order" sacred texts. Thus, in Hinduism, *śruti* literature would be classified as first order and *smṛti* literature as second order sacred texts. However, he then goes on to add:

The supreme scripture in a tradition may play a functionally less important or less visible role in piety than a theoretically second order sacred text. (1987b: 141)

and he cites the example of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, which is held by some bhakti groups as the most sacred scriptural text. This is an important caveat and underlines the limitations of such schema.

<sup>23</sup> Cort states that, in general, a lay Canon-near has less well-defined boundaries than a mendicant Canon-near. He describes how one mendicant Canon-near includes some of the *Āgama* and mendicant ritual texts and one lay Canon-near contains texts from Jain narrative literature used by *sādhus* as the basis for sermons, while another lay Canon-near consists of devotional hymns (1992 185-6).



and Tambiah from monastery libraries in Laos and Thailand, which points towards what Keyes calls a “ritual canon”, consisting of some *Tipiṭaka* texts, the *Visuddhimagga*, pseudo-*jātaka*, histories of shrines, liturgical works and popular commentaries and that these collections of texts vary in content between individual temple-monasteries (1983: 272). The idea that the ritual life of a community plays a fundamental role in determining which texts have most relevance and, consequently, which texts survive, is a crucial aspect of Graham’s notion of scripture:

... scripturality arises not from the formal acts of religious leaders or church councils, however important their eventual roles in confirming the sacrality and boundaries of scripture, but rather in the interaction of persons and groups with a text or texts (1987a: 6)<sup>24</sup>

If each community has its own set of texts, this indicates that it is difficult to posit a fixed canon, since this would then imply that what actually exists in monastic libraries is incomplete or inaccurate.

Collins argues from a different perspective that *the* Pāli Canon is important:

... the actual importance of what we know as the Pali Canon has not lain in the specific texts collected in that list, but rather in the *idea* of such a collection, the idea that one lineage has the definitive list of *buddha-vacana*. So the Pali Canon should be seen as just a ‘canon’ (in one sense of that word) in Pali, one amongst others. (1990: 104)

Collins traces the origin of the idea of the Pāli Canon to a dispute between rival monastic groups.<sup>25</sup> The Mahāvihāra lineage finally emerged as the dominant group and their preoccupation with legitimation led to an emphasis upon a exclusivist idea of

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<sup>24</sup> Acknowledging the relationship between text and ritual is particularly important if, as Hallisey argues, ritual praxis was considered to be the foundation of knowledge:

The very capacity for knowledge depended upon ritual preparation, and in Theravāda Buddhist communities this generally presupposed ordination. (1995: 46).

More fundamentally, it underlines the necessity to view Indian religions as characterized by orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy.

<sup>25</sup> Collins describes how the fortunes of both monastic houses were dependent upon royal patronage. In the first century BCE, Vāṭṭagāmiṇī founded and favoured the Abhayagiri viḥāra, whilst Parakkamabāhu I suppressed the Abhayagiri in the twelfth century CE. No Abhayagiri texts survive, although texts and commentaries are ascribed to them in extant Mahāvihārin works (1990: 96). Earlier, Jayawickrama attributes the fixing of the commentarial tradition to the threat posed to the Mahāvihāra by the power and influence of the Abhayagiri viḥāra (1962: xx-xxi). Opinion is divided on the question of the interaction between the two monastic houses. Jayawickrama and Collins infer from the texts that the relationship was hostile but perhaps this rivalry should not be over-emphasised since, as Norman points out, communication between the two groups was necessary for views attributed to Abhayagiri monks to appear in Mahāvihāra texts and he suggests that since the views are rarely completely rejected, then it is likely that the Abhayagiri group was a sub-sect of the Theravāda, whose views no longer cohered with “the party line” (1991a: 41-2).

canon, which Collins links with the *vaṃsa* genre.<sup>26</sup> Like Cort's twofold model of canon in Jainism, Collins' view is flexible, since he can retain the idea of a canon that is fixed for a given community alongside the awareness that there exists a plurality of canons. Whilst Collins' notion of the idea of the Pāli Canon aptly describes the activities of the Mahāvihāra lineage in Sri Lanka, it can be as easily applied to those European interpreters who, arguably, viewed their task in a similar way. As Norman has observed:

The early European editors of Pāli texts, however, soon discovered that there was no single Pāli tradition. They found that each Buddhist country had its own tradition, and although their texts were for the most part almost identical, there were sometimes significant differences between them, which involved the editors in the task of choosing between the readings transmitted by the various traditions. (1989: 47)

It is, nevertheless, important to determine upon what basis these decisions were made.<sup>27</sup> Folkert has discussed this methodological issue in relation to the corpus of Jain literature and his views are more censorious. According to Folkert, what has occurred is the superimposition of a Canon II model onto a textual history that has strong Canon I characteristics:<sup>28</sup>

For the scholars who transmuted *Āgama* into canon understood the literature in question to be what the term connoted for them: a specified body of text that is closed, i.e., that admits of no open-endedness or alteration. (1993: 79)

and that this betrays a further implicit assumption: that the presence of a corpus of sacred texts is a defining characteristic of a religious tradition. At this point, it is useful

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<sup>26</sup> An umbrella term for types of historical text, usually concerned with genealogies and, in Collins' view, related to *purāṇa*. Collins contends that the Pāli chronicles should be viewed as part of this genre (1990: 99-100).

<sup>27</sup> Hallisey has explored the nature and circumstances of early European scholarship in the field of Theravāda Buddhism. He argues that pressure to have their work recognized amongst academic Orientalists led some independent researchers to construct various strategies to legitimate their work (1995: 41).

<sup>28</sup> Folkert's analysis of the nature of scripture postulates two general types. Canon I texts are normative, oral or written and are present within a tradition due to vector(s), whereas Canon II texts are normative, are independently present within a tradition and are themselves vectors. Folkert justifies his use of the term "vector" ("means or mode by which a thing is carried") to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between text and vector:

... the place of Canon I in a tradition is largely due to its being vectored by some other form of religious activity; such a text cannot be fully perceived without reference to its vector and to the relationship between the two. The same is true of religious activities that are being vectored by a Canon II text. (1993: 70)

Folkert is quick to add caveats similar to those of Graham above, that it is possible for both types to occur within one tradition and to be attributed of the same text. (1993: 69f)

to consider again Fish's notion of interpretive communities: disagreements arise between interpretive communities when one misunderstands or fails to recognise another's text as valid because the interpretive strategies are not shared.

The activity of interpretation is governed by a set of rules, an area which Smith believes requires further investigation in connection with the notion of canon:

Other work remains to be done: an examination of the rules that govern the sharp debates between rival exegetes and exegetical systems in their efforts to manipulate the closed canon. (1982: 52)

It is this activity which, for Smith, is a defining characteristic of canon and, in this respect, his approach differs from those outlined above. Instead of beginning with the idea of canon as a genre, Smith tries to identify the mechanism which generates a canon as such. Smith contends that the formation of a canon (taken in its widest sense)<sup>29</sup> involves an exegetical process. In his "redescription" of canon, Smith explains that canon is related to the genre of list. A list is an open-ended category but once an element of order (the identification of a common principle that underlies the list) is introduced into the list, it becomes a catalogue. With the closure of the catalogue, it is transformed into a canon. However, together with this limitation comes a strategy to overcome this limitation by ingenuity (1982: 49) and this involves the presence of an interpreter:

Where there is a canon, it is possible to predict the *necessary* occurrence of a hermeneute, of an interpreter whose task it is continually to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that is known or everything that exists *without* altering the canon in the process. (1982: 48)

For Smith, a canon cannot exist without a tradition and interpreter and both of these features remain constant:

... canon is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity. (1982: 52)

If, as Smith proposes, the presence of an interpreter is required to create a canon, this suggests that the hermeneutical process he is referring to is akin to the process of commentary. The strategy to limit and then overcome this limitation by exegetical ingenuity resembles the relationship between canon and commentary. Smith's model

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<sup>29</sup> Smith's definition of "canon" is broadly understood in order to include those from non-literate societies (1982: 48-9).



seems to require that the procedure of closure occur prior to the exegetical ingenuity. However, it could be argued that a commentarial tradition is itself the mechanism for closure of the canon: exegesis becomes the strategy to limit and to overcome this limitation.

### The Relationship between Canon and Commentary

Returning to the accounts of the Council at Rājagaha, this principle can be observed. It has already been shown that it is problematic to construe the formation of the Pāli Canon at the Council at Rājagaha on the basis of the canonical account. However, the commentarial accounts of the Council reveal this to be a specific preoccupation. Like the *Cullavagga* account, the *Bāhiraṇidāna* and *Mahāvamsa* accounts<sup>30</sup> make it clear that the elders selected to take part in the recitation of the discipline and teaching were arhats,<sup>31</sup> the implication being that these elders, possessing the highest spiritual qualifications, would add the weight of their spiritual authority to the proceedings. The *Mahāvamsa* account gives further details of their qualifications. They are described as being “repeaters of the ninefold doctrine and versed in all its separate parts” (Geiger 1912: 15), creating the impression that a method for the preservation of individual portions of the teaching already existed. The *Bāhiraṇidāna* makes the point even more prominently: the text describes in detail the particular attainments of Kassapa as a way of establishing his credentials as master of ceremonies due to his intimacy as one of the Buddha’s close aides:

Since I have been honoured with equality in the use of robes by the Exalted One saying, ‘Kassapa, you may wear my patch-work hempen robes which I no longer use,’ and also honoured by placing me on an equal footing with Himself with reference to transcendental attainments, consisting of the categories such as the sixfold higher knowledge and the ninefold successive modes of abiding ... (ID 4)

The account then describes how Kassapa undertakes the selection process, rejecting all but those arhats:

proficient with regard to the learning in all aspects of the Teachings in the entire Three Baskets, had attained mastery in analytical knowledge, were of no mean achievement, and for the greater part were classified by the Exalted One as an expert each in his field in the distinct spheres of the threefold knowledge. (ID 5)

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<sup>30</sup> The *Bāhiraṇidāna* and *Mahāvamsa* accounts each have a different focus and so the event is presented in a slightly different way.

<sup>31</sup> This is with the initial exception of Ānanda. The inclusion of Ānanda after he had become an arhat could also be construed as part of the strategy to highlight the suitability of the five hundred selected.



Here again the commentary makes it clear that the monks selected to intone the discipline and the teaching are of the highest possible calibre, to the extent of having been deemed so by the Buddha himself. Likewise, the text makes it plain that Upāli is given the task of rehearsing *vinaya* because the Buddha described him as the most learned in matters of the discipline.<sup>32</sup>

In the *Bāhiraṇidāna* account, individual *vinaya* texts are listed: *Vibhaṅga*, *Khandhaka* and *Parivāra*. The number of rules are specifically stated for each section:

Then having classified accordingly these four Pārājika entitled the chapter on the Pārājika, they established as thirteen the thirteen Saṅghādisesa ... Thus having classified accordingly the Mahāvibhaṅga, they established the eight rules in the Bhikkhunivibhaṅga entitled the chapter on the Pārājika ... (ID 12)

In the same way, individual discourses of the *Dīghanikāya* are named and the text states that the other discourses were listed in the same way. There then follows a pause in the narrative action, in which the text outlines the way in which “Buddha-word”<sup>33</sup> (*buddhavacana*) can be classified (Sp 16-30). The text describes how Buddha-word can be uniform in its underlying theme of liberation from attachment; twofold as the discipline and teaching; the “Baskets” constitute a threefold division; it is fivefold as the *Nikāya* and ninefold as nine genres of literature (Sp 16-29). The outline is inserted artificially and contains ambiguities in the exposition<sup>34</sup> as well as explicit direction of the reader’s apprehension.<sup>35</sup> What is clear is that the text goes to some lengths to establish exactly how the literature can be classified. In effect, half the account of the Rājagaha Council in the *Bāhiraṇidāna* is concerned with establishing the content of the Canon,

<sup>32</sup> In the *Bāhiraṇidāna* account (Sp 11), it is described how Kassapa suggests Ānanda for this task but the assembled monks argue for Upāli’s candidature and the text supports this view by invoking the *Āṅguttaranikāya*, in which the Buddha is described as saying: “He, O monks, is the most pre-eminent among my disciples who are monks, in the retention of the Vinaya, namely Upāli.” (A i 25). The invocation of the *Āṅguttaranikāya* justifies the choice of Upāli by citing the Buddha’s statement as a precedent.

<sup>33</sup> Smith proposes this rendering of *buddhavacana* to avoid the reductionist translation, “the word of the (historical) Buddha”. He argues that *buddha* is strictly speaking an epithet and, according to the tradition, applied to a number of individuals to indicate transcendent status (1993: 173).

<sup>34</sup> Jayawickrama regards one such as an attempt to extend the meaning of Dhamma to include Abhidhamma (1962: 99 n15/9).

<sup>35</sup> The text asks questions of itself which it then answers:

Therein, what is the Dīghanikāya?

The thirty-four suttas commencing with Brahmajāla arranged in three vaggas (groups).

The thirty-four long suttas whose arrangement is in three vaggas is called the Dīghanikāya, the first in serial order.

And why is it called the Dīghanikāya?

On account of the fact that it is a collection and a resting place for suttas long in measure (it is so termed), and it is called a nikāya as all of them are placed together as a collection. (ID 24; cf. 19)

According to Prince, this constitutes the text performing a reading operation.

presenting various numerical arrangements. Not only is this an explicit illustration of the way in which a commentary is attempting to close a canon by limiting (listing the contents) and overcoming the limitation (ambiguities in exposition) but also it is interesting to note that more than one way of classifying Buddha-word is given. In both *Bāhiranidāna* and *Mahāvamsa* narratives, there is no mention of Purāṇa's version of the teaching, underlining the point that, in these texts, the Rājagaha Council is regarded as sanctioning one particular recension, that of the Mahāvihāra fraternity.

Accounts of the fixing of the Canon are to be found in the Commentaries rather than in canonical texts, wherein different concerns are expressed. Thus it is not until the *Samantapāsādikā* that all the rules are named as part of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (Sp 15-6) and details of the contents of the *Nikāya* are revealed.<sup>36</sup> Collins has argued that the motivation for this was the increasing pressure of maintaining royal patronage and threats by other monastic lineages to undermine the position of the Mahāvihāra as custodians of the tradition. What is clear from all accounts is that the circumstance for the production of this literature was in terms of dispute. The resulting "text" is a canon in Pāli, one amongst others (Collins 1990: 104). The elaboration in the *Samantapāsādikā* suggests at least that the form preserved by the *piṭaka* arrangement is one of several ways that the Canon can be classified in the context of recitation.<sup>37</sup> This view coheres with the evidence of ritual canons in monastic libraries and the use of canon for public recitation purposes.

#### Commentary Establishes Canonicity

It appears, then, that in the Pāli textual tradition, rather than the Canon having a fixed

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<sup>36</sup> The *Cullavagga* account does not elaborate the names and number of each set of rules. It can be argued that, by beginning his commentary with an account of the Council at Rājagaha, Buddhaghosa is reflecting his declared aim of translating the Sinhalese Commentaries into Pāli for the benefit of their wider dissemination (see Jayawickrama 1962: xxxiii for further comment).

<sup>37</sup> In this connection, Dundas has pointed to the work of Wright on the etymology of the word *tipiṭaka*. Wright suggests a link with the Dravidian etonym *tip(p)-*, which appears in Sanskrit as *ṭippaṇa*, *ṭikā*, "commentary". The "Three Baskets" meaning comes as a later explanation (Wright presented his ideas in an inaugural lecture, entitled "Non-Classical Sanskrit Literature" at the School of Oriental and African Studies on 24th November 1965, which was subsequently published by SOAS in 1966). Wright's observation may well have considerable implications for the way in which the relationship between canon and commentary is viewed but Dundas cautions against drawing any definite conclusions, since the etymology still remains unclear. (Personal communication).

form, it can be put into several different forms, depending upon the organizational criteria used or the interpretive situation. As Cutler points out (1992: 549), in traditional Indian culture, a piece of literature is not a self-contained “text-in-itself”. Texts are embedded in contexts, such as an oral performance in front an audience, as an accompaniment to ritual or as part of an hereditary body of knowledge. Patton has noted this phenomenon in connection with the corpus of Vedic literature. She asserts that whilst the Vedas are referred to as a source of authority, there is no “single continuous influence” over time (1994: 6) and thus canonical knowledge in the *Veda* is both fixed and fluid. The manner in which this is presented is dependent upon the specific preoccupations of the interpreters:

... certain forms of canon are emphasized in certain interpretive situations, and thus certain forms of canonical commentary are grounded in that determinant form. (1994: 7)

Patton has identified an important point but one which, it has been suggested, needs to be reoriented in terms of the Pāli tradition. Rather than canonical forms giving rise to commentarial forms, it is a commentarial tradition which generates the normative status of a canon. The form a canon takes is dependent upon the interpretative strategies employed: it is these exegetical strategies which determine the form of a canon. In effect, commentary defines what comes to be regarded as canonical:<sup>38</sup> it fixes the boundaries of what then becomes canonical. Commenting on the process of textualization, Graham describes how a text can be both fixed and fluid:

Even the “fixation” of a sacred canon in writing has rarely meant that one definitive documentary text is universally recognized or that variant texts disappear. (1987b: 138-9)

A text can exist in different recensions and there are different versions of the same recension. The variations are the result of differences in exegetical strategies and different preoccupations in the production of the text’s meaning. Developing this idea, Hoffman maintains that the distinction between text and commentary is fluid, since the commentary participates in the production of the text’s meaning:

One is not then remarking on a finished product, the meaning of which is entirely “given” in the text itself, but is involved in a process of creative appropriation. (1992: 209)

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<sup>38</sup> I am indebted to Charles Hallisey for this insight. Norman hints at a similar conclusion:

The fixing of the commentaries also had the effect of fixing the form of the canonical texts which they commented upon. (1989: 42)

but a more radical view is argued for below.



and he cites the work of Deutsch, who contends that text and commentary are “dependently co-arising” on the basis that “legitimate explication” and “creative innovation” are not in opposition.

#### THE NATURE OF COMMENTARY

If it is the case that a community’s understanding of a text is mediated by commentary (Cort 1992: 178), then it follows that the form a commentary takes is of significance. Like the study of canonical forms, recent research indicates that in the Indian context, there exists a variety of forms of commentary in addition to the mode of verbal exegesis.<sup>39</sup> In his study of *Tirukkuraḷ*, Cutler has identified another form of commentary. He rejects the idea that a commentary is the means by which the author’s intended meaning is somehow recovered. Since the verses are devoid of contextual clues that play major role in verbal communication of meaning (1992: 552), Cutler concludes that the role of the commentary is to provide the context which highlights how the individual verses are bound together (1992: 561).

Commentary features regularly in an oral performative context. Blackburn (1996) has observed the shadow puppet play version of Kampan’s Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, performed in Kerala.<sup>40</sup> The commentary is performed orally in the absence of a conventional audience and the expertise of the performers is judged on the ability to weave the commentary and not on verbal accuracy. The puppeteers compete with each other to produce the most entertaining commentary, such as incorporating episodes from other narrative texts and comments on current affairs.<sup>41</sup>

In the Pāli tradition, the commentarial tradition is the product of a multi-layered editing process.<sup>42</sup> From the extant material, Norman has extrapolated evidence to suggest that additions were made to the commentaries before they were translated into Pāli by Buddhaghosa:

<sup>39</sup> An example can be seen in the work of Narayanan (1992).

<sup>40</sup> Blackburn describes how of the two thousand verses from Kampan sung, about 70% are verbatim and correspond to published sources, 10% vary marginally, while the source of the remainder is unknown (1996: 38).

<sup>41</sup> Earlier, in his survey of techniques for popular recital in South India, Raghavan drew attention to a similar phenomenon in *harikathā*, the exposition of a mythological episode accompanied by music. The reciter is required to exhibit wide learning in sacred literature and to elevate the audience with this knowledge (1959: 137).

<sup>42</sup> This also includes a further layer of editing undertaken by European translators of the texts to formulate the critical editions. Arguably, this process is still occurring as new, annotated translations are appearing and the form these take is determined by the exegetical strategies of the interpretive community which produces them. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.





That there was a continuing commentarial tradition in Ceylon itself is shown by the fact that Buddhaghosa quotes (from the Sinhalese cities he was using) the names of individual Sinhalese theras whose views he is accepting or rejecting (1978: 35)<sup>43</sup>

Norman believes that the Sinhalese commentarial material consisted of heterogeneous mass of material in various dialects and an attempt was therefore made to render it more uniform and intelligible to Sinhalese monks by translating it into the vernacular (1978: 35).

### The Relationship between the Dhammapada and the Dhammapada Commentary

The forms which the Sinhalese Commentaries took are now lost. Comments in prologues to some commentaries indicate that the reason for the translation into Pāli was to render the texts more accessible to wider audience than the vernacular Sinhalese versions allowed. A vernacular origin for the commentarial tradition has caused some to posit a connection between the Commentaries and the folk tradition, in order to explain the greater proportion of narrative in commentarial texts. Leaving aside the questionable assumption that a narrative form necessarily indicates a folk origin, this view is problematic for a number of reasons. A text may utilize features of a “folk tradition” but it would be difficult to classify it as a “folk text” simply because it contains such material. Obeyesekere has observed this phenomenon in the *Mahāvamsa* and comments:

The problem that the *Mahāvamsa* poses for modern historians is not its Sinhala-Buddhist prejudice (this is so clear that it can be dealt with) but the manner in which it has borrowed story elements from the popular tradition and integrated them into its historical narrative. (1989: 79)

Similarly, it can be argued that Pāli narrative literature shares motifs with a pan-Indian narrative folklore tradition but this does not imply that it is or should be classified as folk literature.<sup>44</sup> As Obeyesekere points out, the difficulty lies in identifying the extent to which the borrowing has occurred. For Obeyesekere, the *Mahāvamsa* has

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<sup>43</sup> In his consideration of evidence for the existence of Dravidian commentaries, Norman states that in the *Samantapāsādikā*, Buddhaghosa cites material from the *Andhaka aṭṭhakathā* as views to be refuted (1978: 37).

<sup>44</sup> Bloomfield (1916; 1917) has identified a number of motifs which are common to both Sanskrit and Pāli narrative literature. For further discussion on motifs in folk literature, see Beck, Claus, Goswami and Handoo, eds (1987), Blackburn and Ramanujan, eds (1986); see also Granoff (1991), Obeyesekere, R. & G. (1990).

incorporated motifs from the folk tradition, the source of which he identifies as popular. However, their designation as such remains undefined and this is unhelpful since “popular” can be understood in a number of different ways.

Others argue that the presence of these motifs indicates that such texts are aimed at a lay audience. This view raises further difficulties, since it is not entirely clear how such a proposition could be demonstrated. The connection has been established between *Jātaka* tales and scenes representing narratives from the Buddha’s previous lives, presented on the walls of the Bhārhut and Sāñcī stūpas and the caves at Ajanta<sup>45</sup> but to suggest that these were for purely for the edification of lay followers ignores the ritual context in which they occur. Norman has commented on this issue in relation to the *Dhammapada* and he is of the opinion that the number of versions of the *Dhammapada* indicates the popularity of texts of this kind (1983: 59). The number of recensions may well indicate that it was a text that was well-known. However, in the same way, it could be argued that the large number of translations of the *Dhammapada* is a result of the fact that the text was one of the first Pāli texts to be published in Europe<sup>46</sup> and it is not impossible that this has contributed to its being perceived as a “well-known” Pāli text.<sup>47</sup>

Norman offers an alternative line of enquiry. He points out that several of the verses found in the *Dhammapada* also appear in Jain and Brāhmanical texts and he suggests that these verses are derived “from the general store of floating verses which seems to have existed in Northern India in early times” (1983: 58-9). This view has been put forward by other scholars:

The compiler of the Dh.[ammapada] however certainly did not depend solely on these canonical texts but also made use of the great mass of pithy sayings which formed a vast floating literature of India. (Geiger 1978: 19)

Geiger does not elaborate upon what this vast floating literature might consist of but Radhakrishnan offers the following view:

It is an anthology of Buddhist devotion and practice, which brings together verses in popular use or gathered from different sources. Though it may not

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<sup>45</sup> Barua, Benimadhab and Sinha, Kumar Gangananda, eds & trs. (1926). *Barhut Inscriptions*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press; Schlingloff, Dieter (1987). *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings: Identifications and Interpretations*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

<sup>46</sup> Fausbøll published an edition of the *Dhammapada* in 1855, with an extensive extracts from the Commentary, basing his edition upon the manuscripts brought back from Sri Lanka by Rasmus Rask in 1823 (Norman 1989: 46-7).

<sup>47</sup> In pondering the question of what keeps some texts current while others disappear, Hallisey notes that one consideration has to be the audience who receives the text (1995: 51). In the case of Pāli texts, this now includes the interpretive community of western scholars.

contain the very words of the Buddha, it does embody the spirit of the Buddha's teaching, summoning men to a process of strenuous mental and moral effort. (1950: 1)

Radhakrishnan is suggesting that not only were these verses popular but also drawn from a pool of literature which expressed similar themes to the teaching of the Buddha. Developing this hypothesis, it could then be argued that if the verses common to the pool of renouncer literature describe the path and goal to spiritual attainment in similar terms, then it becomes necessary for each group to orient the verses through exegetical strategies to their own particular aims: in effect, making the verses specifically "Buddhist" or "Jain".<sup>48</sup> However, the hypothesis founders: the difficulty in describing the relations between each text and the verses of the postulated "renouncer" tradition would be at best, painstaking. Rather than suggesting that the number of different recensions is an indication of popularity of the particular type of text<sup>49</sup> or the difficulties involved in postulating of store of verses from a pan-Indian renouncer tradition, the number of recensions perhaps indicates the importance of the presence of such a text in the collection of a particular interpretive community. The addition of a commentary makes this more noticeable, since through exegetical strategies, the verses are located more firmly within the tradition. In the case of the *Dhammapada* Commentary, this is achieved by attributing the pronouncement of the verse directly to the Buddha himself: it is stated categorically that the Buddha pronounces each verse in a certain place with reference to a certain person. The location of the verses in prose settings is a strategy found in *Nikāya* texts and adds further authentication to the Commentary: readers, familiar with such literature, will frame the Commentary intertextually in this way.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> In an article, Norman examines the paradox of how the "greatest of men" could be "without faith", set up by verse 97 of the *Dhammapada*. Norman argues that in order to resolve this dilemma, it is necessary to postulate what he terms "good" and "bad" readings of the verse and it is only the good readings that have survived. Interestingly, he offers the following hypothesis to explain why this may be the case:

*Since there is nothing specifically Buddhist about Dhp 97*, it is possible that its composition pre-dates the foundation of Buddhism. It is therefore possible that the set of bad meanings had already been lost when it was included in the Buddhist collections. (1991b: 193; emphasis added).

Norman wisely does not elaborate upon the implications of this, since it is highly speculative line of analysis. Norman is claiming that, in order to resolve of the paradox generated by translation, his suggested interpretative strategy needs to be employed and as such, his conclusions provide an example of the intertwining of exegetical strategies from different interpretive communities in the interpretation of a text, which becomes apparent after considering the way in which the text is framed by its interpreters.

<sup>49</sup> Since, as Norman has argued elsewhere, this could be explained as a result of the activity of independent *bhāṇaka* traditions (see above).

<sup>50</sup> In discussing the form of the *Dhammapada* Commentary, Malalasekera (1994: 97) inserts a comment from Law, which already hints at a similar conclusion:

The *Dhammapada*, unlike the great *Nikāyas*, which consist of prose and *gāthās*, is entirely

## CONCLUSION

It has been shown how a narrow view of the relationship between canon and commentary in Pāli literature can overlook the complex dynamic of exegetical strategies that has occurred in the formation of the corpus of texts. As Smith contends, canonicity is generated by exegetical strategies. In the case of Pāli texts, exegetical strategies confer authenticity onto material by associating it with an authoritative person, a process illustrated by the relationship between the *Dhammapada* and the *Dhammapada Commentary*. The Commentarial narratives provide the location and addressee for the pronouncement of the individual verse(s) by the Buddha. Through this exegetical strategy, each verse is attributed to the Buddha and becomes “canonical”. This points to a notion of canonicity, which, in this context, is created by the authority conferred by association with the Buddha rather than from any property inherent in the text. This view coheres with the mechanism for ascribing authority (Four Appeals to Authority) described elsewhere in the texts and as such, constitutes an exegetical strategy peculiar to the interpretive community.

Exegetical strategies can appear already incorporated into a text and, in this case, the commentary on the text serves as a further layer of authentication (if it is the case that the material is still disputed). For example, the *Suttavibhaṅga* incorporates a prose setting, locating the promulgation of the rule, as well as a gloss and further commentary is provided in the *Samantapāsādikā*. In other words, exegetical strategies, devices to ascribe authority, can be identified in both “canonical” as well as “commentarial” texts, underlining the use of the terms *pāli* and *aṭṭhakathā* as “text” and “saying what it means” and highlighting the artificiality of their use as a distinction between canon and commentary.

In the accounts of the Council at Rājagaha, in the *Cullavagga*, the “canonical” account, the text is more preoccupied with recording the occasion when it was necessary to associate the Mahāvihāra set of texts as closely as possible with the Buddha and exegetical strategies are used in this endeavour, as illustrated by the formulaic questioning of Upāli and Ānanda by Kassapa. The *Samantapāsādikā* supplies only a brief gloss on selected phrases from the *Cullavagga* in the way that the title of relevant section, *Pañcasatikakkhandhakavaṇṇanā*, suggests and the detailed account of

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made up of gāthās without the prose setting, which, in the Nikāyas, is supplied in the text itself. Here, therefore, was the necessity of bringing it into line with those canonical works. (*The Life and Work of Buddhaghosa*. Calcutta: 1923, p. 81)



the Council proceedings is given in the *Bāhiraṇidāna*, where the content of the Canon is listed in full. This suggests that, although verbal exegesis is present in Pāli texts, the commentarial form is not exhausted by a straightforward gloss. The ongoing exegetical enterprise is also reflected in the various ways in which the texts can be arranged. The arrangement into “baskets” is for public recitation purposes only: it does not denote a genre of literature or a definitive way of classifying the literature.

It must be understood that the view presented is not one in which a text is only to be regarded as canonical because it has a commentary. The purpose is to draw attention to the notion that exegetical strategies are utilized in the construction of a body of scripture. When a community creates its texts through particular exegetical strategies, the resulting collection is regarded as authoritative. By the same token, this authoritative status is dependent upon and, indeed, formulated by the exegetical strategies of the interpretive community. A reorientation of the conventionally understood relationship between canon and commentary is therefore proposed. Given the integral relationship between canon and commentary, the way in which canon is established by commentary, it is no longer sufficient to view the Pāli Commentaries as only useful in clarifying passages from canonical works or of historical interest but as pieces of literature which play a fundamental role in the shaping of Pāli texts.

## CHAPTER THREE

FRAMING THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY<sup>1</sup>INTRODUCTION

Persuasion, writes Fish, is an activity in which facts are presented in the light of an already assumed interpretation (1980: 365). Fish makes this statement in the context of arguing for the merits of a model of interpretation based upon persuasion, one in which critical activity itself is constitutive of the text, over against a demonstration model, where a universal interpretative mechanism reveals the features of an independently existing text. On a demonstration model of critical activity, the purpose of commentary would involve only the dictionary-style definition of the words of a text, yet this is to overlook much else of what is happening in a commentarial text. The art of persuasion, Fish continues, is successful for as long as whichever perspective being established is done so in anticipation of objections (1980: 368-9). For Fish, a text is constituted from one of a number of “equally interested” perspectives. Rather than a progression towards a more accurate account of a stable text, movement in interpretive activity involves the dislodging of one such perspective by another, creating other texts previously unavailable (1980: 365-6). The extent to which the reader is persuaded by the point of view expressed, is influenced by the kinds of framing activity undertaken and, argues Reid, the degree to which this activity is regulated or disrupted.

In the case of the Dhammapada Commentary, it has already been noted how the narratives provide authentication for the set of verses, thereby rendering the verses undisputedly part of the collection of texts regarded as authoritative. As an exegetical strategy, this can be viewed as part of a set of exegetical strategies peculiar to an interpretive community, strategies which are generated by that interpretive community and imbued with the preoccupations of that community. Various other strategies can be revealed by examining the way in which the text is framed by communities of both ancient and modern interpreters.

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter appear in an earlier version as “Control of the Narratorial Voice as a Commentarial Technique in the Dhammapada Commentary”, *Cosmos* 10/1, June 1994. See appendix.

# CIRCUMTEXTUAL FRAMING OF THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

Circumtextual framing of the text will vary between interpretive communities depending upon the medium in which the commentary is presented. Those who read the text in manuscript form will frame the text differently from those who read Norman's Pāli edition or Burlingame's translation. The text always remains as a commentary on the Dhammapada but the physical surroundings of the text's presentation change and this has an effect upon different readers' perceptions of the text. For example, Pāli manuscripts in *pothī* form (Sanskrit: *pustaka*), made from palm leaves threaded together, are kept between cover boards, which can be highly ornamented, gilded or encased in silver with filigree work,<sup>2</sup> indicating the text's importance or value.

The overall impression of Norman's critical edition is of a text designed for scholarly study. Norman was asked by Rhys Davids to compile an edition of the Commentary from the various manuscripts and manuscript fragments as part of the Pāli Text Society's continuing editing and translation series.<sup>3</sup> Norman's text is derived from a synthesis, transliterated into Roman script, of Sinhalese, Cambodian, Burmese and European collections of manuscripts, the details of which are all outlined in the preface to volume one (p. v-ix). Each volume contains a number of vaggas from the Dhammapada Commentary, although it is not clear why the text has been divided in this particular way.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the text, there are footnotes which give variant readings preserved by the different manuscript traditions. As a consequence, it is not always possible in Norman's version of the text, to distinguish between the text and its surroundings. Institutionalized reading practices will influence the reader's attitudes to the information contained in the footnotes, since no guidance on how to view them is given by Norman.<sup>5</sup>

Burlingame's English translation is part of the Harvard Oriental Series.<sup>6</sup> His three

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<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Zwalf, W. ed. (1985). *Buddhism: Art and Faith*. London: British Museum Publications, p. 42f.

<sup>3</sup> Norman, H. C. ed. (1906-14). *The Commentary on the Dhammapada*. 4 volumes and index (index compiled by L. S. Tailang, 1915) Pāli Text Society. London: Henry Frowde. PTS reprint, 4 vols, 1992-3. A brief biography of Norman by Macdonell is provided at the beginning of Volume Four to mark the death of Norman in 1913.

<sup>4</sup> Volume I contains *vagga* i-iv, Volume II contains *vagga* v-viii, Volume III has *vagga* ix-xxii and *vagga* xxiii-xxvi are found in Volume IV. There may be an entirely technical explanation to do with the logistics of printing. Nevertheless, the arrangement is part of the circumtextual framing and will influence a reader's perception of the text.

<sup>5</sup> For example, for some interpretive communities, this might involve preconceptions about "vernacular" literature. At this point, circumtextual framing merges with the extratextual framing of the text.

<sup>6</sup> The Harvard Oriental Series was sponsored by Henry Clarke Warren, a prolific translator of Buddhist texts. An acknowledgement to him includes the following:

volumes are numbered 28, 29 and 30 and collectively entitled “Buddhist Legends”. Burlingame’s text is framed by an extended introduction<sup>7</sup> in which he includes a photogravure of a Sinhalese palm-leaf manuscript and facsimiles of a page of Pāli text in both Burmese and Sinhalese characters. In addition to an index of the stories<sup>8</sup> (HOS 28. xx-xxxviii) and synopses of the stories (HOS 28. 71-141), Burlingame has also included, in an extended introduction, an outline of what he considers to be the main features of Buddhism, an account of the “Legendary life of the Buddha”, as well as a discussion of the Dhammapada Commentary in relation to other Pali texts (HOS 28. 1-69).<sup>9</sup> Like Norman’s text, it is not clear if there is a reason behind the particular way in which the vaggas of the Dhammapada Commentary are divided between the three volumes.<sup>10</sup> However, Burlingame’s text offers more by way of circumtextual framing which directs the reader’s understanding of his text: the introduction provides the reader with the means by which the text is to be understood. This may or may not confirm the reader’s preconceptions about the text.

#### EXTRATEXTUAL FRAMING OF THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

To a certain extent, the way in which a commentary is circumtextually framed is also influenced by the particular preconceptions of interpretive communities. In the critical editions and translations of the Dhammapada Commentary, it is possible to discern evidence of the kinds of presuppositions about the nature of commentary amongst the interpretive community of modern Western scholars, which constitute part of their extratextual framing of the commentary on the Dhammapada and, consequently, how the material is presented.

If the purpose of commentary is understood as the explanation and interpretation of the words of a given text, then it is not surprising to find a verbal gloss on a passage considered as the primary way in which the meaning of the text can be determined. In

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The Series, as a contribution to the work of enabling the Occident to understand the Orient, is the fruit of an enlightened liberality which now seems to have been an almost prophetic anticipation on his part of a great political need.

<sup>7</sup> This constitutes half of Volume 28.

<sup>8</sup> This is an extremely helpful and detailed index for the scholar, giving the location of Burlingame’s translation of each narrative in Norman’s edition as well as in the Burmese and Sinhalese editions.

<sup>9</sup> At the end of Volume 30, there is a general index to the three volumes of stories, a memorial to Henry Clarke Warren by Charles R. Lanman, the editor of the Series, and information about the Series and its publications.

<sup>10</sup> Volume 28 contains a translation of Books 1-2; Volume 29 has Books 3-12 and Books 13-26 are in Volume 30.



general, commentaries on Pāli canonical texts do not depart from this particular methodology and by and large the use of verbal gloss with narrative as illustrative support is a regular feature of the commentaries. However, there are several Pāli commentaries in which the narrative element predominates. In such cases, when verbal gloss forms the lesser part and narrative constitutes the greater part of a commentary, it is not unusual to find the narrative discarded by modern scholars in favour of the part which exhibits a more recognizable form of commentary. An example of one scholar's lamentation on the lack of prominence given to verbal gloss in commentarial texts can be found in the introduction to Burlingame's translation of the Dhammapada Commentary:

... the exegesis of the text becomes a matter of secondary importance altogether and is relegated to the background. ... To all intents and purposes, what was once a commentary has become nothing more or less than a huge collection of legends and folktales. (HOS 28. 26)<sup>11</sup>

In addition, Burlingame is of the opinion that there is "no organic connection" (HOS 28. 28) between the content of the story and verse and this is attributed to some failure on the part of the commentator.<sup>12</sup> Burlingame may be right in suggesting that the gloss is of secondary importance in the Dhammapada Commentary<sup>13</sup> but, by seeking to impose an overall consistency on the narratives from a narrowly focussed view of commentary, he ignores the possibility that the narratives themselves could have some purpose other than illustration. In other words, the apparent "discrepancy" between narrative and verse could perhaps indicate that there is more happening in the text than his view allows. Gombrich has also identified "discrepancies" in Pāli texts:

The texts contain many and sometimes discrepant accounts of such central topics as meditation. ... But another reason I posit for discrepancies is that monks were arguing about these topics and that the texts sometimes preserve more than one side of an argument. (1996: 96-7)

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<sup>11</sup> Ironically, one of Burlingame's main preoccupations in his annotation of the translation itself is to draw attention in a series of footnotes to the parallels between Dhammapada Commentary narratives and similar tales and motifs from Indian narrative literature.

<sup>12</sup> This is a harsh comment, since there is a fairly explicit connection between verse and story, if it appears occasionally a little contrived. At this point, though, Burlingame is comparing the style of the Pāli Commentaries with that of the *Brāhmaṇa*, wherein he claims that the commentator " ... is careful to subordinate the element of fiction to his main purpose, the exegesis of the text. He never introduces a good story merely for the sake of the story." (HOS 28. 26). Thite, in his study of the *Pañcatantra*, has observed that while the moral of the story is mentioned at the beginning and end of the tale (e. g. ape and wedge, I. 1; tortoise and geese, I. 13), the moral and the story are not always in complete agreement (e. g. serpent and ants, III. 4) and he attributes this to the author changing the "real moral" to accord with the general tone of the fables (1984: 41).

<sup>13</sup> In fact, Burlingame is so unimpressed with the quality of the gloss that, with three exceptions, he omits the gloss passages from his translation (HOS 28. 28).

Here Gombrich is proposing that inconsistencies in the material are due to the presence of more than one view in a given text and this he attributes to a process of change he has identified in the texts as a result of debates between monks.<sup>14</sup> Inconsistencies arise when a text appears to entertain a number of views which are not “resolved” by the text. That this is the case is clear from the Pāli commentaries, where references are made to interpretations attributed to *porāṇa* and *keci*. The specific identity of each is not given in the commentaries but based upon her reading of *ṭīkā*, Horner expresses the view that *keci* refers to the residents of the *Abhayagirivihāra*. Of the former, Horner surmises that prose and verse extracts of their interpretations appear in the commentaries (1981: 88). Horner and Norman share the same view that the inclusion of other views in *Mahāvihāra* texts indicates that at least some of these views were regarded as valid.<sup>15</sup>

This can be illustrated by examining the juxtaposition of the Two Vocations (*dve dhurāṇi*) in narratives from the Dhammapada Commentary. After keeping residence for five years, in which time he would have completed his education under the guidance of a preceptor, it appears that a postulant could decide which of the Two Vocations he wished to follow thereafter. In the Dhammapada Commentary, the Two Vocations are outlined by the Buddha in response to Mahāpāla’s enquiry (DhpA i 7f). The Vocation of Texts (*ganthadhura*) involves learning Buddha-word according to ability, either one or two *Nikāya* or the whole *Tipiṭaka* and memorizing it, reciting and speaking it. The Vocation of Insight (*vipassanādhura*) leads to arhatship and requires a simple life away from distractions, in order to concentrate on the idea of decay and death and to develop insight.<sup>16</sup> However, common to all accounts is the option of *vipassanādhura* for those who have joined the Saṅgha in old age.<sup>17</sup> The reason given in the text for the rejection of *ganthadhura* is that old age inhibits the correct undertaking of the study of texts. Thus, when Mahāpāla meets his younger brother to settle his affairs before joining the Saṅgha, Cullapāla tries to persuade him to wait until he is an old man before he leaves the household life. Having heard the Dhamma, Mahāpāla does not wish to wait until he

<sup>14</sup> Gombrich highlights two processes of change: scholastic literalism and debate and states that the two are not mutually exclusive. (1996: 96-7).

<sup>15</sup> Intratextually, it could also be argued that the specific identity of these groups is not important and serves as a device to introduce material to confirm a view or is later refuted, in much the same way as *pūrvapakṣa* is used in *śāstra* literature. In the case of *pūrvapakṣa*, the view of an opponent is outlined and then refuted before the view of the text is stated. The opponent’s view may or may not be identified. (I am grateful to Charles Hallisey for suggesting this analogy.)

<sup>16</sup> The narrative of Mahāpāla’s career has the only account with such detail. Subsequent occasions employ a summary form, recording which decision is made but omitting the detail of what is involved.

<sup>17</sup> The stories about the Two Vocations feature two male characters, either brothers or friends and it is the elder of the pair who always chooses *vipassanādhura* and the younger who chooses *ganthadhura*.

is too old and feeble to follow the teaching. Thus, after the Two Vocations have been described to him, he chooses *vipassanādhura* and it is not long before he becomes an arhat.<sup>18</sup>

However, underlying the narratives, there appears to be an ambivalent attitude towards the Vocation of Texts. In the Commentary, there are narratives in which individual monks are praised by the Buddha and deities for excellent recitation of Dhamma, such as the narrative of Soṇa (DhpA iv 101-112), alongside narratives in which those involved in the transmission of the teaching are portrayed as villains (e. g. DhpA iii 139-42). When the two modes are compared in some narratives, the success of the Vocation of Insight contrasted with the inevitable downfall of those who follow the Vocation of Study, as in the following example. Kapila is one of two brothers who become renouncers and he chooses the Vocation of Texts,<sup>19</sup> becomes arrogant and conceited and adopts an irredeemable mode of conduct. As a result he is reborn first in *Avīci* and then as a golden-coloured fish. However, it is made very clear that the fish's beauty of form was achieved by Kapila's recitation of Dhamma and the virtues of the Buddha and yet, as soon as the fish opens his mouth, the extent of Kapila's evil mode of conduct becomes apparent: the whole of the Jeta-Grove is pervaded by his stinking breath (DhpA iv 41).<sup>20</sup> In effect, these instances constitute examples of so-called "discrepancies": the text preserving more than one interpretation of a given issue.<sup>21</sup>

#### INTRATEXTUAL FRAMING IN THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

Jayawickrama, who has translated several commentarial works, holds a different view of the Pāli commentarial tradition from Burlingame. He claims that the system of

<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, there seems to be an association between arhatship and old age in the Dhammapada Commentary. Those who choose *vipassanādhura* are given a subject of meditation and invariably they succeed in becoming arhats. Those who attain arhatship before ordination are furnished with the "eight requisites" by supernatural power (if they have performed a work of merit in a previous life, such as Bāhiya Dārucīriya (DhpA ii 215). At the same time as receiving the eight requisites, they become like elders of sixty or eighty years old, such as Jambuka (DhpA ii 61; c. f. Kappina and his companions, DhpA ii 121; Uggasena, DhpA iv 63; Sarada in Anomadassi's dispensation, DhpA i 109). On the other hand, the Dhammapada Commentary contains instances of seven-year old novices who become arhats (DhpA ii 84f, 127f, 188f, 240f; iii 87, iv 120f, 176f). In most cases, the merit accumulated from previous existences which makes the attainment possible, is carefully recorded in an *atītavatthu* which, unusually in the Dhammapada Commentary, is placed first in the order of narration.

<sup>19</sup> In making the decision, he says to himself, "I am still young; when I am old, I will fulfil the Vocation of Texts" (DhpA iv 37-8).

<sup>20</sup> In another narrative, Poṭhila is a renowned *tipītakadhara* who has not yet considered the possibility of seeking escape from suffering for himself. After being admonished by the Buddha, he goes to a forest hermitage inhabited by arhats, where he abandons his dependence on the external trappings of religion and he learns from the youngest novice how to meditate (DhpA iii 419f).

<sup>21</sup> The implications of this for the commentarial enterprise will be explored in Chapter Five.



commentary devised by the *Mahāvihāra* is justifiably lauded in the prologues to some commentaries:

It is apparent that the system evolved in the *Mahāvihāra* throughout the centuries was so comprehensive and thorough that it was jealously guarded by its custodians and won the admiration of men of the calibre of Buddhaghosa. (1962: xvi-xvii)

Ñāṇamoli also argues for a systematic commentarial method and expresses the idea that the commentaries, whilst relying on the exegetical apparatus of *Nettipakaraṇa*, do not display the method of the *Nettipakaraṇa* itself “... as the finished building does not show the scaffolding” (1962: liv). Such “scaffolding” would form part of the intratextual framing of the text. Intratextual framing may take shape from the pages themselves in the form of paragraph breaks, blank spaces and illustrations,<sup>22</sup> all of which subtly alter the reader’s apprehension of the text. For example, Fausbøll’s edition of *Jātaka* employs fonts of different sizes to distinguish between Stories of the Present and Past. In his translation, Burlingame also indicates clearly where a Story of the Present ends and a Story of the Past begins (eg 28.158, 167 etc), although the Pāli of Norman’s transliteration does not include such explicit sign-posting.

### Prologue

The most striking example of this type of framing can be seen in the prologue to a commentary. In general, commentarial prologues have five features. There is the “Namo” formula which forms the opening phrase of most Pāli texts, followed by the verbal obeisance to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. The third element varies between texts and is followed by a short passage revealing the reason for the commentary, usually at the request of an elder or to remove inconsistencies or

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<sup>22</sup> *Pothī* manuscripts often contain illustrations. A space is left around the hole through which the cotton string is threaded, creating a space on the leaf. There is an indication of various features of the *Tipiṭaka* compilation arrangement in the *Samantapāsādikā*:

Thus, this word of the Buddha ... was rehearsed together by the assembly of self-controlled monks with Mahākassapa as their leader verily observing this distinction. And not only this, but other divers distinctions in compilation to be met with in the three Piṭakas, such as the stanzas containing lists of contents, the arrangement into chapters, noting down of repetitions, and the classification into kindred sections of ones, twos, and so forth, that into groups of kindred topics, and into groups of fifties and so forth, have been determined when it was thus rehearsed together in seven months. (ID 26-7)

Norman (1989: 30 n5) regards the inclusion of this passage as an anachronism and it is difficult to argue against this view but this should not preclude speculation on the reason for the inclusion of such a passage.



misunderstandings.<sup>23</sup> The fifth element is an exhortation to the readers to pay a particular kind of attention to the commentary and thereby experience a specified type of response to the text.<sup>24</sup> These various motifs can be construed as attempts to establish textual authority: a figure from the monastic hierarchy is invoked as declaring the necessity for such a commentary or the text is explicitly connected with another work. In addition, the participation of a specific audience is required through the evocation of certain modes of response. Intratextually, the inclusion of such an explicit statement draws attention to the nature of the text as narrative. The evocation of specific responses signifies that the narrative of the Dhammapada Commentary is to be differentiated from other forms of narrative and consequently, the reader's mode of apprehending the text must be altered. It is apparent that narrative which is not transformed in this way is regarded as a hindrance to spiritual attainment. This point is emphasized in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*. A group of monks admit to indulging in "aimless talk" in the Assembly Hall upon their return from almsgathering. The Buddha explains what is appropriate subject matter for their conversation:

There are ten topics of talk. What ten? Talk about wanting little, about contentment, seclusion, solitude, energetic striving, virtue, concentration, insight, release, release by knowing and seeing. These monks are the ten topics of talk. (GS V 87)

What is being positively discouraged is "unedifying conversation" (*tiracchānakathā*). The reason for this is clearly stated elsewhere:

Why do I say this? Because monks such talk is not concerned with profit, it is not the rudiments of the holy life, [it does not conduce to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquility, to full understanding, to perfect wisdom,] it does not conduce to Nibbana. (KS V 357)

*Tiracchānakathā* is translated variously as "animal talk, wrong or childish talk" (PED); "low conversation" (Rhys Davids 1899); "worldly talk" (Horner 1942); "unedifying conversation" (Walshe 1987). The following definition is set out in the *Suttavibhaṅga*:

... talk of kings, talk of thieves, talk of great ministers, talk of armies, talk of fears, talk of battles, talk of food, talk of drink, talk of clothes, talk of beds, talk

<sup>23</sup> It is stated that the Dhammapada Commentary came to be compiled in Pāli at the request of Elder Kumārakassapa because in a Sinhalese recension, it would only be accessible to a small audience (DhpA i 1-2).

<sup>24</sup> In the case of the Dhammapada Commentary, the response is "joy and delight" (*pītipāmojja*). A more detailed discussion of this and other modes of response in Pāli texts is developed in Chapter Four.

of garlands, talk of scents, talk of relations, talk of vehicles, talk of villages, talk of little towns, talk of towns, talk of the country, talk of women, talk of strong drink, talk of streets, talk of wells, talk of those departed before, talk of diversity, speculation about the world, speculation about the sea, talk on becoming and not becoming thus or thus. (BD III 82-3)<sup>25</sup>

It is not hard to see the implications of this description of such conversation for the narrative commentaries, since nearly all their content could be construed as “unedifying talk” and thus not conducive to liberation. A more detailed examination of the term *tiracchānakathā* will reveal how this is resolved.

*Tiracchānakathā* is often used to characterize the behaviour of wanderers (*paribbājaka*) when they are gathered together.<sup>26</sup> However, there are instances of monks behaving in the same way. In the *Vinayapiṭaka*, a group known as the Chabbaggiya monks indulge in aimless conversation. Yet they are rebuked by the Buddha for other misdemeanours such as entering the village at the wrong time (Vin iv 164) or for wearing wooden shoes and making a loud noise (Vin i 188), rather than for indulging in *tiracchānakathā*.<sup>27</sup> There appears to be no overt condemnation of *tiracchānakathā* in the *Vinayapiṭaka*. In fact, there seems to be a group of monks characterized specifically as *tiracchānakathikā*. In one episode, Dabba the Mallian is assigning lodgings to different categories of monks from the same company, amongst whom are those described as *tiracchānakathikā* (Vin ii 75). Lamotte (1958: 164) opines that *tiracchānakathikā* (Sanskrit: *tiraścakathikā*) indicates specialists in folklore, on the same basis as those able to recite the discipline or chant discourses. Underlying Lamotte’s opinion is the idea that the “folktales” of Buddhist literature were designed for lay people. This is not easy to demonstrate either way. Norman postulates an association made between *tiracchānakathā* and telling stories around the fire in the following extract from the *Āṅguttaranikāya*:<sup>28</sup>

Monks, there are five disadvantages from fire. What five? It is bad for the eye, causes ugliness, causes weakness, (folk)-gatherings grow and tales of animals are told because of it. Verily, monks, these are the five disadvantages from fire. (A iii 256)

<sup>25</sup> Horner (1942: 82) notes that a similar list of what constitutes unedifying conversation is found at Vin i 188, where there is a different reading of *surākathā* (talk of strong drink) is given as “talk of heroes” (*sūrakathā*).

<sup>26</sup> M i 76; A v 185.

<sup>27</sup> The Dhammapada Commentary contains a version of this episode. No mention is made of the Chabbaggiya monks indulging in *tiracchānakathā* (DhpA iii 330-1).

<sup>28</sup> I must thank Professor Norman for his comments and additional references (personal communication, February 1992) See also his article *Pāli Lexicographical Studies XI: Six Pāli Etymologies*. Journal of the Pāli Text Society XVIII 1993: 154-6.

Even Buddhaghosa seems to share the opinion that *tiracchānakathā* is inappropriate in certain contexts:

*Speech*: that included in the thirty-two kinds of aimless talk is unsuitable; for it leads to the disappearance of the sign. But talk based on the ten examples of talk is suitable; though even that should be discussed with moderation.

*Person*: one not given to aimless talk, who has the special qualities of virtue, etc., by acquaintanceship with whom the unconcentrated mind becomes concentrated, or the concentrated mind more so, is suitable. One who is much concerned with his body, who is addicted to aimless talk, is unsuitable; for he only creates disturbances, like muddy water added to clear water. (PPn 133)<sup>29</sup>

As in the quotation from the *Samyuttanikāya* above, the context here concerns the desirability to create situations in which spiritual development is possible and this can be achieved by not associating with those whose disposition is inappropriate. It appears that rather than specialists in folklore as Lamotte suggests, “chatterers” (*tiracchānakathikā*) and the self-indulgent (*kāyadaḥhībahulā*) indicate particular modes of behaviour which are not conducive to spiritual progress and indeed, behaviour which is not irredeemable, as Buddhaghosa goes on to add in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, forms of chatter are acceptable if accompanied by a caveat, such as the following after talk about kings:

By saying “For even he who has great power dies”, the talk going on thus becomes a subject of meditation. (Sv i 89)<sup>30</sup>

Thus at the end of *rājakathā*, if there is the reflection that such powerful personages are subject to decay, then the talk becomes a topic of meditation (Rahula 1956: 162). “Unedifying conversation” is rendered edifying by transforming it into a topic of meditation. Buddhaghosa himself adds a similar phrase at the end of every chapter in the *Visuddhimagga*, such as:

The first chapter called ‘The Description of Virtue’ in the Path of Purification, composed for the purpose of gladdening good people (*sādhujanapāmojjatthāya*) (PPn 58)

A similar formulation can also be found in the *Mahāvamsa*. Each chapter ends with a

<sup>29</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* continues:

As it was owing to one such as this that the attainments of a young bhikkhu who lived at Koṭapabbata vanished, not to mention the sign.  
the point being that associating with such a person is not conducive to spiritual attainment.

<sup>30</sup> ‘So pi nāma evaṃ mahānubhāvo khayaṃ gato’ ti evaṃ pavattā pana kammaṭṭhāna-bhāve tiṭṭhati.

verse adapted from the following format:

This is the end of the first chapter, entitled “The Tathāgata’s Visit”, in the Mahāvamsa, compiled to inspire confidence and stir up good people. (*sujanappasādasamvegatthāya*)<sup>31</sup> (Mhv I. 84)

Since the contents of the *Mahāvamsa* consists of chronicling dynasties, battles and politics, it constitutes chatter as defined by Buddhaghosa (Sv i 89). Yet with the addition of the phrase above, it becomes part of Buddhist religious practice. Similarly, by claiming that a narrative commentary is intended to invoke certain responses connected with meditational practice, this renders that material a subject of meditation rather than “chatter” and the text is incorporated into spiritual practice. Once the apprehension of the text is transformed into a form of meditational practice, this association with spiritual practice aligns the text with what is perceived to be the mainstream tradition, thereby ensuring the text’s recognition.

Other features of the prologue and colophon could be viewed in the same way. In the colophon, there is an ascription of authorship to Buddhaghosa. Judging by the language of the prologue, Norman (1906: xvii) ventures the opinion that Buddhaghosa can only be credited with the composition of the gloss. As Burlingame points out, this is the only place in the Commentary where there is an explicit identification and he compares this with prologues to the *Visuddhimagga*, *Vinayapiṭaka* and commentaries on four *Nikāya*, which all contain such references (HOS 28. 59). Burlingame is of the view that Buddhaghosa is not the author of the Dhammapada Commentary and what convinces him of this position is his observation of a difference in language and style between both the Dhammapada and Jātaka Commentaries and the other commentaries ascribed to Buddhaghosa. He also appears to imply that the Commentaries on the Dhammapada and Jātaka are somehow lesser works as a result of their uncertain authorship.<sup>32</sup>

Burlingame assumes, not unreasonably given the use of the first person singular in the prologue to the Dhammapada Commentary, that the text has been composed by a single author. It can be argued that to a certain extent the emphasis of this line of argument is misplaced. The text itself provides a clue as to how it derives its authority. The Colophon lists in great detail the various attributes and qualifications that

<sup>31</sup> *Pasāda* and *samvega* are emotions evoked in preparatory stages of mental purification. A more detailed exposition of these two terms is given in Chapter Four.

<sup>32</sup> Not only does Burlingame regard the Vinaya and Nikāya Commentaries as Buddhaghosa’s “principal works” but he also refers to the “four greater Nikāyas”, implying that the *Khuddakanikāya* is somehow inferior to the others (HOS 28. 59).



Buddhaghosa is said to possess and it also makes an explicit reference to teachers:

“This Dhammapada Commentary was completed by assigning the name bestowed by the teachers.” (DhpA iv 236)<sup>33</sup>

By examining other textual locations which mention Buddhaghosa, it can be seen why an association with Buddhaghosa is desirable. The *Cūlavamsa* includes a short account which chronicles the career of Buddhaghosa, culminating in his achieving the position of authoritative redactor of the commentaries. As a young *brāhmaṇa* in Jambudīpa, he acquired great learning and rhetorical skills and passed much of the time locked in intellectual debate. He was noticed by the Elder Revata, who confounds him in disputation and then discourses on *abhidhamma*. The young *brāhmaṇa* is engaged by the Elder Revata’s discourse, asks for acceptance into the Saṅgha and memorizes the *Tipiṭaka*. As if to foreshadow the intimate association between Buddhaghosa and purity (*visuddhi*), the narrative records how he is struck by a particular phrase, identified by Geiger as the opening sentence of a *Samyuttanikāya* discourse.<sup>34</sup> Revata also discerns Buddhaghosa’s aptitude for commentary and asks him to travel to the Island (Sri Lanka) and translate Mahinda’s Sinhalese Commentaries into Pāli. After studying the Commentaries, Buddhaghosa declares that they alone interpret the intention (*adhippāya*) of the Buddha’s words. In response to a test of his skill, Buddhaghosa composes the *Visuddhimagga* which he reads to the assembled community near the Mahābodhi tree at the *Mahāvihāra*. As a result, he is given the Three “Baskets” and Commentaries and having completed the translation, he returns to Jambudīpa to worship the bo-tree.

There is a theme which runs through this account of Buddhaghosa’s career. The chronicle seems anxious to establish a connection between Buddhaghosa and the Buddha by associating him very closely with *bodhi* and the Buddha himself. Firstly, he is born near a place called ‘Throne of Enlightenment’ (*Bodhimanda*), establishing the association very strongly from the very first. Secondly, the identification of Buddhaghosa with the *Ekāyano* ... phrase, if taken from *Samyuttanikāya*, is interesting because it is placed at a time immediately after the Buddha’s enlightenment.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, the name Buddhaghosa is bestowed upon him because “his speech was profound like that of the Buddha” (Geiger 1929: 23) and ‘his speech (resounded) through the earth like (that of the) Buddha’ (Geiger 1929: 24). Fourthly, he reads out the *Visuddhimagga*

<sup>33</sup> *guruhi gahitanāmadheyyena katā ayaṃ Dhammapadassa atthavaṇṇanā*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ekāyano yam maggo sattānam visuddhiyā sokaparidevānam* ... (S v 167) The passage also occurs at M i 55-63 and D ii 290-315, both of which are about mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

<sup>35</sup> There is a discrepancy in the way the wording is reproduced between *sutta* and *vamsa*: the *Cūlavamsa* has *ekāyano ayaṃ maggo* (Cv i 18).

near the Mahābodhi tree and he returns to Jambudīpa to render honour to the bo-tree. Finally, and most explicitly, he is hailed by the monks as Metteyya, the future Buddha:

Then the community, satisfied and exceedingly well-pleased, cried again and again: “without doubt this is Metteyya” and handed over to him the books of the Three Pitakas together with the commentary. (Geiger 1929: 26)<sup>36</sup>

In the *Cūlavamsa*, there is an attempt to establish a close connection between the Buddha and Buddhaghosa as a way of justifying Buddhaghosa’s status as an authoritative interpreter of the *Theravāda* tradition. The Dhammapada Commentary Colophon can be viewed in a similar way. The text is associated with Buddhaghosa not as author *per se* but in his perceived role as interpreter of the *Theravāda* tradition. Thus, the issue at stake is not whether Buddhaghosa can be regarded as the author but how successful the text is at associating itself with such an authoritative figure. This involves shifting the emphasis of textual analysis away from the search for the “author” to identifying the preoccupations displayed by the texts themselves, the extratextual framing of the text and how this also functions to frame the text intratextually.<sup>37</sup>

### Opening Sentence

For the most part, each of the Dhammapada Commentary narratives begins in the same way. The first few words of the *Dhammapada* verse are given and then immediately linked directly with the Buddha:

*Of enjoyment.* The Teacher, while dwelling at the Jeta-Grove, expounded this instruction in the teaching about Prince Anitthagandha. (DhpA iii 281)<sup>38</sup>

This formulaic opening sentence recalls the way in which the accounts of the Council at Rājagaha record the elaboration of the discipline and teaching, by stating the location

<sup>36</sup> This episode occurs after three editions of the *Visuddhimagga* produced by Buddhaghosa have been read out to the Saṅgha at the *Mahāvihāra* and no discrepancy between them has been found. The deities, desiring to demonstrate Buddhaghosa’s scholarly skill, had made the first two copies disappear, causing Buddhaghosa to reproduce the text a second and a third time.

<sup>37</sup> Authorship of the Commentaries is a keenly debated subject in Pāli studies. With regard to the Dhammapada Commentary, Hazra compiles the views of scholars for and against the idea of Buddhaghosa as author. In other modern sources, lengthy discussions are devoted to Buddhaghosa as commentator (Jayawickrama 1962; Malalasekera 1994) and the ascription of authorship to Buddhaghosa, at least of the Commentaries on four *Nikāya*, is usually understood (Norman 1978; von Hinüber 1996). None of these discussions is conclusive and instead reveals a particular preoccupation, part of the extratextual framing of the text: the need for a text to have an identified author.

<sup>38</sup> *Kāmato ti imaṃ dhammadesanaṃ Satthā Jetavane viharanto Anitthagandhakumāraṃ nāma ārabha kathesi.* (According to his notation, Burlingame begins DhpA iii 281 after this sentence.)

and addressee of the verse(s).<sup>39</sup> In the *Cullavagga* account of the Council at Rājagaha, the main emphasis of the narrative is to verify the connection between the Buddha, the teaching and the monastic discipline. The net effect is to further modify the reader's mode of apprehending the Dhammapada Commentary. McDermott has observed a similar feature in the commentary on the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*. He states that since the verses are part of the *Tipiṭaka*, their status as *Buddhavaṇṇana* is not at issue and Dhammapāla's commentary serves to reiterate this by providing an opportunity for a fuller elaboration of the indicators of such acceptance:

To use the psalms of the *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā* as an example, in the context of the *Tipiṭaka*, where they have been placed, their consistency with the *suttas* and the *vinaya* is patent. This being the case, Dhammapāla's commentary provides the basis for the full application of the *mahāpadesa* criteria for the *gāthas*. He does this by stating the occasion for the utterance of each of the psalms and noting the spiritual qualifications of its composer. (1984: 27)

Scholars have identified a mechanism in canonical texts, known as the "Four Great Authorities" (*cattāro mahāpadesā*), by which a teaching is authenticated. Any claims to be in possession of a teaching received directly from the Buddha, Saṅgha, a group of learned elders (*bhaddhūtattherā*) or one learned elder must be compared with *sutta* and *vinaya* before it is accepted as "well taken" or rejected as "badly taken". For example, a monk may claim to have heard a teaching from the Buddha himself:

"Face to face with the Exalted One, your reverence, did I hear it; face to face with him did I receive it. This is Dhamma, this is Vinaya, this is the Master's teaching." (GS II 175)

The monk is claiming the Buddha as the authority behind his presentation of the teaching. Thus a more accurate rendering of *cattāro mahāpadesā* would be "the four principal appeals to authority".<sup>40</sup> It is the task of others to test whether his appeal is to be accepted. The instructions given to those who are to scrutinize the teaching are quite specific:

"Now, monks, the words of that monk are neither to be welcomed nor scorned, but without welcoming, without scorning, the words and syllables thereof are to be closely scrutinized, laid beside Sutta and compared with Vinaya." (GS II 175)

<sup>39</sup> Lutgendorf, in describing Hindi narratives, asserts that an appeal to tradition or a disclaimer to originality serve as a key to the performance, a "necessary cue" to prepare the reader or listener to become an audience for a display of verbal art (1991: 23). As such, this constitutes intratextual framing of the text: the audience's apprehension of the narrative performance is altered. It also constitutes part of the intertextual framing of the text.

<sup>40</sup> Ñāṇamoli 1962: 37 n120/1; Gombrich 1990: 26.



If they do not match *sutta* and *vinaya*, the conclusion is that they are not Buddha-word, have been wrongly taken by the monk and should be rejected. If they do conform with *sutta* and *vinaya* material, then they are rightly taken, they are Buddha-word and should be borne in mind as the first (appeal to) authority. In the case of the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* commentaries, Dhammapāla provides the context for the inclusion of the verses as *Buddhavacana*. In the case of the Dhammapada Commentary, the opening sentence of each narrative serves the same purpose: it is further evidence that the context of authenticity for the Dhammapada verse(s) is being established in the Commentary. The first word or words from the Dhammapada verse followed by the particle *ti* is a feature common to all commentaries and indicates that the narrative portion is to be framed intra- and intertextually as an integral part of the Commentary on the verse.

### Setting

Of the 305 stories of the Dhammapada Commentary, 248 are set in groves (*vana*). *Vana* designates a forest, wood, a place of pleasure or sport but also a place which is not entirely free from danger. It was the practice for groups of wanderers to rest in such places set aside temporarily or permanently by the owner. Little detail is given of such places apart from the following, the thought which motivates King Bimbisāra to donate the Bamboo-Grove to the Buddha and his followers:

“Now, where could the Lord stay that would neither be too far from a village nor too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible for people whenever they want, not crowded by day, having little noise at night, little sound, without folk’s breath, haunts of privacy, suitable for seclusion?” (BD IV 51; cf. Vin ii 157)

In the Dhammapada Commentary, the majority of the grove-stories are set in the Jeta-Grove. This grove was donated to the Community by Anāthapiṇḍika, a treasurer.<sup>41</sup> In *Nikāya* literature, the grove is referred to as “Anāthapiṇḍika’s pleasure-garden in the Jeta-Grove” (*Jetavane Anāthapiṇḍikassa Ārāma*, Ud 5; D i 178).<sup>42</sup> The commentaries

<sup>41</sup> Anāthapiṇḍika had purchased it from Prince Jeta, after covering the entire area of the grove with gold pieces. The *Cullavagga* records this memorable episode and goes on to describe how Anāthapiṇḍika prepared the grove by building a large *vihāra* complex which included dwelling places, meditation cells and walkways. The *Nidānakathā* describes the elaborate dedication ceremony which took place (J i 92ff).

<sup>42</sup> Dutt offers the following definition of an *ārāma*: “... an enclosed site, usually a donation to monks by a wealthy man in or near a town, looked after by the owner himself” (1962: 56).



state that this appellation is deliberate so that the names of the former and new owner will be recorded and remind people of the merit accruing from such acts of generosity (UdA 56). In the Dhammapada Commentary, the Jetavana monastery is taken as established and consequently there is no detailing of the circumstances of its origin. It is usual for the simple phrase “the Teacher, while dwelling at the Jeta-Grove ...” (Satthā Jetavane viharanto ...) to be stated in the Commentary, an indication that perhaps the grove was well-known or that the Jetavana complex had declined in importance or no longer existed.<sup>43</sup>

Although Propp maintains that there is a tendency in narratives of this type to concentrate on action and give only minimal detailing of character, landscape and circumstances of action (1984: 21), the Jeta-Grove seems to be an important venue for the setting of the Dhammapada Commentary narratives, as indeed is Sāvattihī itself. The Commentary carefully details that the Buddha spent a total of twenty-five rainy seasons, half of his career in Sāvattihī, either at Jetavana or Pubbārāma (DhpA i 4).<sup>44</sup> Indeed, one of the most significant episodes in the Dhammapada Commentary, that of the Double Marvel (*yamakappāṭihāriya*), takes place at Sāvattihī and it is stated that Sāvattihī is the place where all the Buddhas have performed great miracles (DhpA iii 205).<sup>45</sup>

The similarities in format and style between Udāna and Dhammapada Commentary have already been noted by Burlingame (HOS 28. 28) and a greater proportion of narratives (62.5%) in the Udāna are set in Sāvattihī. Both texts provide a prose setting to situate the verse(s) as a pronouncement of the Buddha. In the case of the Dhammapada Commentary, this serves as an exegetical strategy to authenticate the verses and locate them firmly within the collection of texts. A similar process has already taken place in the Udāna.

### “The Teacher”

In the Dhammapada Commentary, the Buddha is referred by the epithet, “the teacher” (Satthā):

*He who has tasted the sweetness of solitude.* This religious instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Vesālī with reference to a

<sup>43</sup> By the seventh century CE, when he visited Sāvattihī, Hsüan-tsang recorded that only the foundations of monastic residences remained and all else was in ruins (Beal 1884: 4).

<sup>44</sup> 19 and 6 rainy seasons respectively (cf. BuA 3; AA i 314).

<sup>45</sup> Although the event itself is frequently referred to, other accounts (J iv 263-267; Divy xii 146-166) do not offer the same degree of detail in recounting such episodes as the finding of the sandalwood block and fashioning of the bowl, the creation of the jewelled walkway and the offers of six notable followers to perform miracles, suggesting that the association of the Buddha with this location is important.

certain monk.

For when the Teacher said, “Monks, four months hence I shall pass into Nibbāna,” seven hundred monks of his retinue were overwhelmed with fear, the Arahats experienced religious exaltation, while those who had not yet attained the Fruit of Conversion were unable to restrain their tears. (HOS 30. 78)

Whilst this appellation is used quite consistently throughout the commentary, there are occasions when other titles appear:

*It is a good thing to look upon the Noble.* This religious instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Beḷuva village with reference to Sakka.

For when the Tathāgata’s Aggregate of Life was at an end and he was suffering from an attack of dysentery, Sakka king of gods became aware of it and thought to himself, “It is my duty to go to the Teacher and to minister to him in his sickness.” (HOS 30. 79)

*Tathāgata* is a term frequently used in *sutta* literature and here the text draws the reader’s attention to another discourse which it modifies. In fact, later on in the narrative the text refers to a character from the *Sakkapañhasuttanta* (D ii 263-89), thus reminding the reader of the way the narrative is commenting on this. It then becomes clear that another discourse is being referred to when the text uses another epithet.<sup>46</sup>

### Kira

After the opening sentence, stating the location and addressee of the Dhammapada verse(s), the narrative proper is introduced through the particle *kira*. This particle, which occurs within and outside direct speech, has been understood, when used outside direct speech, as introducing legendary or traditional material and is translated as “Tradition has it that ...” or “The story goes that ...”. This viewpoint has been challenged by van Daalen, who offers a detailed analysis of the usage of *kira*. According to van Daalen, the meaning of *kira* is dependent upon context and can sometimes be left untranslated, since English has difficulty in conveying the sense of the word. Such phrases commonly given for *kira* such as “It is said that”, are to be used as translation-aids and only apply to reported speech. He begins by considering Ickler’s interpretation, a variation on the theme of *kira* indicating traditional material (1988: 114f), that *kira* indicates that a different narrative time is being described and that *kira* operates as a marker of this time to both audience and narrator. It is pointed out by van Daalen that, while Ickler’s view has some merit, it is the context which makes it clear which of the

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<sup>46</sup> This is an instance of the overlap of intratextual and intertextual framing.

three narrative times is being indicated: it is not a function of the particle itself (1988: 114).<sup>47</sup> Van Daalen has identified four categories for the use of *kira*/*kila* in Sanskrit, Prākṛit and the Pāli *Jātaka*. He argues for a quite specific usage of *kira* in the *Jātakas*, in which *kira* occurs in the second sentence of the *paccuppannavatthu*. For example, Chalmers translates a passage from the *Nandajātaka* as follows:

This story was told by the master while at Jetavana, about a co-resident pupil of Sāriputta. Tradition says that this Brother was meek and docile, and was zealous in ministering to the Elder... (Cowell I 98)

Van Daalen explains that here it is incorrect to take *kira* as indicating traditional material and he classifies this usage of *kira* as a special case in his Category D, in which *kira* is used to express cause, reason or grounds for. Hence a more accurate translation of the above would be as follows:

The Teacher, while dwelling at Jetavana, told this about a co-resident pupil of Elder Sāriputta. For this monk was well-spoken ... (J i 224)<sup>48</sup>

Thus *kira* in the second sentence of the introductory story indicates the immediate cause of or reason for the Buddha's story. Once these distinctions are made, it is no longer possible to maintain that *kira* in the second sentence of a commentarial narrative introduces legendary material, as this would suggest that it is characterised by an element of uncertainty. Van Daalen stresses that in reported speech, *kira* indicates a person's uncertainty about the information conveyed not that the information itself is to be doubted. *Kira* is not an instance of reported speech in this context and more importantly, it is unlikely that such material would be introduced since it would seriously undermine the commentarial enterprise of establishing the authenticity of the Dhammapada verses. Van Daalen's analysis is convincing: he recognizes that there is an assumption about the nature of the material introduced by *kira* underlying the view that it introduces legendary material:

We must not lose sight of the story's perspective: what is traditional to us may be contemporaneous with or belonging to the recent past of the characters. (1988: 129)

Through van Daalen's analysis, it can be demonstrated that *kira* is part of the structure

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<sup>47</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary, material from a time outside the narrative is usually introduced by the word *atīte* "in the past".

<sup>48</sup> *Idaṃ Satthā Jetavane viharanto Sāriputtattherassa saddhivihārikaṃ ārabha katesi. So kira bhikkhu suvaco ahoṣi ...*



of the Dhammapada Commentary which alters the reader's apprehension of the text, not because it introduces legendary material but because it indicates the reason why the Buddha pronounced the Dhammapada verse(s) and as such constitutes a form of intratextual framing.<sup>49</sup>

Returning to the example from the *Nandajātaka* (J i 224-6), the first sentence of the *paccuppannavatthu* introduces the fickle monk, co-resident pupil of Sāriputta and the *kira* sentence outlines a specific incidence of the monk's fickle nature, giving rise to the *atītavatthu* which shows how in a previous existence, the monk had exhibited the same behaviour. The *paccuppannavatthu* formula in the *Jātaka* narratives is fairly consistent and consequently the detail of the incident which prompts the *atītavatthu* is often omitted and the reader is referred instead to one either already recounted or to be recounted:

This occasion is just like the one described in the *Devadhammajātaka* above. (J i 206)<sup>50</sup>

In this *jātaka*, both the Stories of the Present and the Past will be given in the *Samvarajātaka* in the Eleventh Book, for the occasion in that one is the same as in this one but the verses are at variance. (J i 136)<sup>51</sup>

A similar editorial policy is adopted in the Dhammapada Commentary, although to a lesser extent (DhpA i 133). The format of the Dhammapada Commentary narratives follows a similar pattern to those of the *Jātaka* but there are significant differences which arise from a more variable and unstable textual framework. As in the case of the *Jātaka* stories, *kira* and *hi* occur in the second sentence. This sentence develops the process of contextualization outlined in the first sentence. In most cases, the sentence containing *kira* features the person or group of persons named or unnamed in the first sentence:

The Teacher, while dwelling at Jetavana, told this about the Female Elder Uppalavaṇṇā. For she had made an Earnest Wish at the feet of Padumuttara Buddha ...

<sup>49</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary, approximately 60% of the narratives are introduced in this way, with 30% of the remainder by the particle *hi* which functions in a similar fashion. A sample from the *Jātaka* Commentary indicates a lesser percentage, around one third each, introduced by *kira* and *hi*. Other texts analysed include *Petavatthu* Commentary (69% *kira*) and *Vimānavatthu* Commentary (3.5% *kira*).

<sup>50</sup> *Vatthuṃ heṭṭhā Devadhammajātaka vuttasadisam eva.*

<sup>51</sup> *Imasmiṃ pana jātake paccuppannavatthuṃ ca atītavatthuṃ ca Ekādasanipate Samvarajātaka āvibhavissati, vatthuṃ hi tasmiṃ ca imasmiṃ ca ekasadisam eva, gāthā pana nānā.*



The Teacher, while dwelling at Jetavana, told this about two co-resident monks. For they had obtained a subject of meditation from the Teacher and had entered a forest hermitage.

The main difference between the *Jātaka* and the *Dhammapada* commentaries is as follows. In the *Jātaka* Commentary, the canonical *gāthas* are for the most part embedded in the prose of the *atītavatthu*, episodes from the Buddha's previous existences. In the *Dhammapada* Commentary, there is no such unifying textual framework (not even the general one of the Buddha's career). The *gāthas* appear at the end of the narrative and rarely if at all in the *atītavatthu*. In addition, some of the stories do not have *atītavatthu*.<sup>52</sup> When there is an *atītavatthu*, the Buddha is not always the narrator and the story is not always about a past life of the Bodhisatta. There are some stories in which the *atītavatthu* is presented first. In these cases, the *kira* sentence is part of the *atītavatthu*.

Each *vagga* of the *Dhammapada* Commentary is divided into *vatthu*. Each individual *vatthu* bears the name of a character or characters who feature prominently in the narrative, such as *Ahipetavatthu* (DhpA ii 63); *Ānandattherapañhavatthu* (DhpA i 420). Whilst it is appropriate to translate *vatthu* as story in some texts, the use is more specific in the *Dhammapada* Commentary. In this case, it means "occasion", "matter", that is, the circumstance of which it is necessary to be apprised, in order to facilitate understanding and as such makes more sense in the context of a commentary.<sup>53</sup>

### *Anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā*

Towards the end of each narrative section, a paraphrase of the *Dhammapada* verse is put into the mouth of the Buddha and the narrative proper ends:

"...Today the novice Sukha saw ditchdiggers leading the water in a watercourse, arrowmakers straightening their arrows, and carpenters fashioning wheels and so forth. And having seen these things, he subdued himself and attained arahatship." And so saying, he [the Buddha] pronounced the following stanza:

Ditchdiggers lead the water, arrowmakers bend their shafts,  
Carpenters bend the wood, good men control themselves.  
(HOS 29. 327)

<sup>52</sup> This does not include those narratives which refer to a *Jātaka* which the Buddha told but the detail is not relayed.

<sup>53</sup> This is in accordance with the van Daalen's use of *kira* in the *Jātaka*:  
... which inform us or remind us of something which is necessary for a right understanding and which is the ground for a statement, a course of action, an event. (Van Daalen 1988: 120)

In one fifth of the Dhammapada Commentary stories, there is a slightly different ending to the prose: the verse is paraphrased and another element is introduced into the formula before the verse is pronounced:

“Monks, in the act of committing wicked deeds, simpletons do not realize their wickedness. Afterwards however they are consumed by the wicked deeds they have themselves committed, and are like burning forests which they themselves have set on fire.” *So saying, he joined the connection, and preaching the Law pronounced the following stanza:*

In the act of committing wicked deeds, the simpleton does not realize their wickedness;  
But the stupid man is consumed by his own wicked deeds, as if burnt with fire.

(HOS 29. 203; emphasis added)

The meaning of the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā* is not entirely clear from Burlingame’s rendering as “he joined the connection”. In the *Jātaka* narratives, the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā* occurs after the *atītavatthu* has been told and the teaching expounded but before the characters of the *jātaka* have been identified. The formula is so consistent that it is stated in the text that the phrase “he told the two stories” will be omitted, noting that it is to be understood in all the narratives that follow (J i 156). A little further on, the phrase “he recited the four truths” is dispensed with on the same understanding (J i 190). Shortly after, the phrase “he joined the connection” is omitted (J i 363). All that remains is the identification (*samodhāna*) of the characters, which alters between each tale. It appears that these elements are accepted features of this type of commentary and therefore it is unnecessary to keep repeating them and so the phrases are edited out (cf. J i 153-154).<sup>54</sup>

The Critical Pāli Dictionary offers the following definition:

to give the connection (between the *atītavatthu* and the *paccuppannavatthu* of a *Jātaka* tale, hence (in the Dhammapada Commentary) to show the application of a story ...

According to this definition, the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā* in the *Jātaka* narratives is

<sup>54</sup> It is suggested by von Hinüber suggests that, since the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā* only occurs in the first *Jātaka* narrative, it appears that a singular phrase from the *Jātaka* Commentary has been generalized in the Dhammapada Commentary (1996: 133). This theory is strongly dependent on his view that the Dhammapada Commentary has been “modernized” under the influence of the *Jātaka* Commentary, on the basis that there is no acknowledgement of the Dhammapada Commentary as source for any narratives in the *Jātaka* Commentary (1996: 134). However, it could be as easily explained as an editorial decision to omit the phrase, as in the *Jātaka* Commentary.

designed to connect the Story of the Past with the Story of the Present.<sup>55</sup> However, in the Dhammapada Commentary, the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā* does not appear at the end of every narrative, there is no equivalent statement to the editorial policy described above and it is still not clear what is meant by showing “the application of a story”. Instead, it is possible that, reflected in this rendering, is a view of the narratives themselves. If the narratives are understood as containing material drawn from popular, legendary sources, then there has to be a mechanism by which the verse(s) are connected to the narratives, since, according to Burlingame, the narratives appear at times to be rather contrived to fit the verse(s). Hence, *anusandhi* is understood as in some way explaining how the verse and prose material is connected. However, this rendering reveals more about the way in which the Commentary is framed extratextually by the interpretive community of its editors and translators, since *anusandhi* does not appear elsewhere in this way.

In his exposition of Recollection on Dhamma, Buddhaghosa includes an exposition on *anusandhi* (Vism i 213). In describing how Dhamma is well-proclaimed, Buddhaghosa says that Dhamma of the scriptures (*pariyattidhamma*) is good in the beginning, middle and end. Not only is every single stanza good in the beginning, middle and end but also where there occurs a single sequence of meaning (*ekānusandhi*) or several sequences of meaning (*nānānusandhi*) in a *sutta*. Ñāṇamoli’s explanatory note to this passage identifies the term as an exegetical device:

‘*Anusandhi*-- sequence of meaning’: a technical commentarial term signifying both a particular subject treated in a discourse, and also the way of linking one subject with another in the same discourse. (1956: 231 n31)

In the introduction to his translation of the *Paramatthajotikā* (1960: vi-viii), Ñāṇamoli gives a summary of the “exegetical apparatus” used in the text and in the *sutta* commentaries, largely based on the *Nettipakaraṇa*. Sequence of meaning (*anusandhi*) appears as one of the important features of this method used in the explanation of *sutta*.<sup>56</sup> Ñāṇamoli then lists three types of *anusandhi*: a sequence of meaning based on a question (*pucchānusandhi*); a sequence of meaning dictated by the speaker or hearer’s inclination (*ajjhāsayānusandhi*); a sequence of meaning dictated by the natural structure

<sup>55</sup> von Hinüber proposes that the phrase marks the transition from prose to verse (1996: 133).

<sup>56</sup> Ñāṇamoli (1960: vi-vii) outlines the features of *atthakathā* as follows: placing (*nikkhepa*) a *sutta* in the order of recitation of texts and explanation of the *sutta*, which involves origin (*samutṭhāna*) and source or contemporaneous circumstance (*nidāna*) or setting for the utterance of the *sutta*, terms which set forth or establish (*adhiṭṭhāna*), sequence of meaning (*anusandhi*) and commentary (*vaṇṇanā*) on phrasing (*byañjana*) and meaning (*attha*).



of the teaching (*yathānusandhi*).<sup>57</sup> In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, Buddhaghosa elaborates on the three types of *anusandhi* (Sv i 122; c. f. Ps i 175). *Pucchānusandhi* is to be understood when a *sutta* is given in response to a question. Buddhaghosa states that when the Buddha becomes aware of the contents of an individual's mind, he gives a discourse directly suited to that person's frame of mind.<sup>58</sup> Another type of *anusandhi* is outlined in the *Nettipakaraṇa*: consecutive sequence (*pubbāparānusandhi*) is part of the fourfold array (*catubyūha*).<sup>59</sup> *Pubbāparānusandhi* is of four kinds: sequence of meaning, phrasing, teaching and demonstration.<sup>60</sup> Amongst the usages cited in the *Nettipakaraṇa* Commentary, *pubbāparānusandhi* signifies the joining of the last part with the first part of the *sutta*.<sup>61</sup>

Ñāṇamoli's exposition of commentarial method presents each element in terms of a technical discussion of commentarial apparatus and, as a consequence, overlooks the context in which these terms occur. Returning to Buddhaghosa's discussion, *anusandhi* appears in connection with *sutta* material, in particular with reference to the internal coherence of a discourse, when the subject matter changes as the result of a question and its place amongst the ordering of other *suttas*. Here, the close association with such material, and by extension, the Buddha, is evident. This is made more explicit in the *Jātaka* and *Dhammapada* Commentaries, where it is the Buddha himself who "joins the connection". The type of *anusandhi* is not specified in the Commentary but it always occurs in conjunction with the phrase *dhammaṃ desento*.<sup>62</sup> At the end of the first

<sup>57</sup> The three types of *anusandhi* appear in the description of contents in the *Udāna*, comprising eight *vagga*, 95 *gāthā*, recitation sections "numbering eight and a half", 81 *anusandhi* of which 1 *pucchānusandhi* occurs in the *Bodhisutta*, 2 in *Suppavāsāsutta*, the rest being *yathānusandhi*, there being no *ajjhāsayānusandhi* (UdA 4).

<sup>58</sup> For example, the *Ākaṅkheyyasutta*: the lower instruction (*heṭṭhā-desanā*) is about morality and the higher instruction (*uparī-desanā*) is about the Six Higher Knowledges (Sv i 123). There may well be a link between this form of *anusandhi* and intentional language (*sandhābhāṣā*), employed in the Tantric tradition and designed to be understood only by an initiate (Bharati 1965: 169). Bhattacharya discusses the phrase *yaṃ sandhāya vuttam* (J i 203; UdA 26 (taṃ), 97; Dhpa iii 460) in relation to *sandhābhāṣā* and concludes that there is evidence to suggest a form of intentional language in Pāli texts, which points to two kinds of instruction, literal and implied (1928: 293-4). It is beyond the scope of this work to verify this claim but it is sufficient to conclude the phrase is employed in commentaries as a mechanism by which the reader is directed towards a particular interpretation. My thanks to Paul Dundas for suggesting the original line of enquiry (personal communication).

<sup>59</sup> Ñāṇamoli (1962: xxxviii) describes how the phrasing of a *sutta* is made up of sixteen modes of conveying (*hara*), one of which is the fourfold array. A text must possess etymology (*nerutta*), the speaker's intention (*adhippāya*), the circumstances surrounding the utterance (*nidāna*) and coherence or consecutive sequence (*pubbāparānusandhi*).

<sup>60</sup> Sequence of teaching (*desanānusandhi*) is equivalent to *yathānusandhi* (NettiA ??).

<sup>61</sup> In the case of *saṅgiti*, *pubbāparānusandhi* is the putting together of a *sutta* being praised with *sutta* which come before and after. In addition, *pubbāparānusandhi* can be the joining of one line with the preceding line (Netti p. 202): in the PTS edition, the editor provides extracts from the *Nettipakaraṇa* Commentary.

<sup>62</sup> The type of *anusandhi* used in the Commentary bears similarities with consecutive sequence (*pubbāparānusandhi*), where the last part of a *sutta* is joined with the first.



narrative in the Dhammapada Commentary, there is a simile which appears to describe the mechanism of *anusandhi* and the function of the term becomes more apparent:

After relating this occasion and establishing the connection, as if stamping an order with a royal seal after having the clay affixed, the Dhamma-king pronounced this verse ... (DhpA i 21)<sup>63</sup>

The verse pronounced by the Buddha is likened to the seal imprinted in the clay on a royal proclamation. The authenticity of a proclamation is recognized by the seal and thus serves as a device to legitimate its contents. It is possible that *anusandhi* serves a similar function as part of the Commentary's aim to locate the verses of the Dhammapada as the words of the Buddha. The formulaic end to the narrative links back to the opening sentence, serving to remind the reader of the location of the verses and to introduce the verses, thereby altering the way in which the reader apprehends the text.

### Gloss and Spiritual Attainment

Burlingame does not entertain a very high opinion of the quality of the glosses which appear after the verses of the Dhammapada:

Semi-occasionally a gloss is of some assistance in the interpretation of the text. But more often than not the glosses are not only of no assistance whatever, but are positively misleading. Words and expressions from eight to ten centuries old, whose meaning and history are perfectly well known to us, the glossographer, whoever he may be, interprets after the manner of the scholastics of the fifth century A. D. Such etymologies as he gives are, like all other Hindu etymologies, the merest puns and utterly valueless. The problem of really difficult words, he generally evades, either by not noticing the words at all, or by the familiar expedient of including the term defined in the definition. (HOS 28. 28)

Burlingame's disappointment in the gloss passages is evident. However, an argument could be made to suggest that the gloss passages add a further layer of legitimation to the text, since the readings of authoritative persons, "the teachers" of the Colophon, preserved cumulatively, are contained within them.

In the final part of each narrative section, the spiritual attainment of the main protagonist(s) is detailed in the following manner:

At the end of the instruction, many became Stream-Winners, etc and the instruction was beneficial to a multitude. (DhpA i 384)<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *idaṃ vatthum kathetvā anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā patiṭṭhāpitamattikaṃ sāsanaṃ rājamuddāya lañchento viya dhammarājā imaṃ gātham āha.*

<sup>64</sup> *Desanāvasāne bahū sotāpattiṭṭhalādīni pattā, desanā mahājanassa sātthikā jātā ti.*

The effectiveness of this device operates on two levels. In most cases, the spiritual attainment of a named individual is verified. The detailing of spiritual attainment, ranging from “profiting by the teaching” or becoming a Stream-Winner to the declaration of an arhat, is designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the path to spiritual attainment of the Buddha. Secondly, a close connection is established between text and spiritual development: an individual achieves a certain kind of spiritual attainment as a result of hearing the Buddha pronounce verses of the Dhammapada. This links back to the Prologue, where the hope is expressed that the reader will experience “joy and delight” as a result of paying attention to the Commentary, in accordance with the reason given in the Prologue why the verses of the Dhammapada were taught by the Buddha and thereby the legitimacy of the text is further reinforced.<sup>65</sup>

#### INTERTEXTUAL FRAMING

It has been shown that in the narratives themselves, there are phrases which specifically state how certain parts of the text are to be understood. Such specific instructions do not always appear in the narratives and there are other techniques which direct the reader’s understanding and these can be identified by examining the way in which the text is framed intertextually.

#### Adaptation

The Dhammapada Commentary contains narratives of some episodes which occur in canonical or other commentarial locations, such as a part of the biography of the Buddha, the story of Devadatta’s machinations against the Buddha and additions to the monastic discipline.<sup>66</sup> In a number of instances, entire *Jātaka* tales are incorporated into the text of the Dhammapada Commentary and allusions to other Indian narrative texts can be discerned in the text. In the introduction to his translation,<sup>67</sup> Burlingame

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<sup>65</sup> A more detailed examination can be found in Chapter Five.

<sup>66</sup> Hallisey has identified this feature as a peculiarity of Sinhalese versions of the biography of the Buddha:

The Sinhala texts clearly assume a relatively consistent biographical structure, but they also rearrange the biographical material for a variety of purposes. (1995: 39)

<sup>67</sup> Burlingame provides “Synoptical tables”, noting the relationships between stories of the Dhammapada Commentary and other Pāli texts (HOS 28. 45-57). He also notes references to Dhammapada Commentary stories in the *Milindapañha* and similarities with Sanskrit, Tibetan, Sinhalese and Burmese tales (28.61-6).

speculates upon the mechanism of adaptation employed in the Commentary:

If a legend or story which he [the commentator] finds in the Sacred Scriptures or Commentaries can be improved on by alteration or expansion or compression, he makes such changes in it as suit his purpose. If a story will do very well just as it stands, he copies it word for word, sometimes telling where he got it, but more often not. Or it may suit his purpose better to tell the story in his own words, introducing original touches here and there. Or he may have heard a good story from a traveler or a sailor or a villager or a fellow-monk. (HOS 28. 27)

Based upon inferences drawn from references in the text, Burlingame is describing the way in which he believes material is adapted from other sources and used in the commentary. He comments on the source of a story in the *Bālavagga* in a footnote:

This story is derived from *Udāna*, v. 3: 48-50, as the text expressly says at ii 33<sup>21</sup>. (HOS 29. 119 n1)

Thus, Burlingame is of the view that a reference to a text in the narratives constitutes a citation of source (28. 27). It is difficult, on this view of commentarial narrative, to explain this adaptation of material as deliberate, except perhaps to presume some impoverishment of resources on the part of the Commentary. Arguing against the view that interpolations and contradictions within narratives are accretions or embellishments, Srinivasan illustrates how the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* adapts generally well-known material from elsewhere to propound particular views and ideas (1980: 197-8). In addition, rather than extracting and analysing individual myths, Srinivasan advocates the necessity to examine each myth “in terms of the arrangements it enters into with other like units” (1980: 198). This is a key element of intertextual framing, which Reid is keen to emphasize. Intertextual framing is more than a matter of adaptation, since it indicates how a reader is to view the text in relation to other texts. Returning to the example above, it can be argued that there is a specific purpose for the adaptation. The Pāli of the introductory sentence reads as follows:

The matter of Suppabuddha is handed down (*āgatam*) in the *Udāna* (DhpA ii 33)<sup>68</sup>

Whilst this does appear to be a reference to another text, it certainly cannot be construed as an “express” statement that the story is derived from the *Udāna* but rather that there

<sup>68</sup> Burlingame renders this sentence as follows:

The story of the leper Suppabuddha is found in the *Udāna*. (29.119)

is another location for this episode, which is being brought deliberately to the reader's attention. As such it is an intertextual reference (which also functions intratextually), through which the reader's understanding of the *Udāna* version will be modified by the Commentary.

Minor differences between the Dhammapada Commentary and other versions are perceptible and indicate a deliberate intention to modify the tale in accordance with the purpose of the Dhammapada Commentary. Given the fluid nature of a corpus of literature based upon an oral tradition, it is difficult to determine whether there is a sequence of adaptation between such tales and the task of ascertaining derivation becomes somewhat hazardous. The type of adaptation is made from already existing material but not necessarily from an "original tale".<sup>69</sup> What is more interesting is the frequency of adaptation of a particular story and the way in which the adaptation is carried out. A possible clue to the purpose of adaptation can be discerned when tales are referred to by their title only:

And he told the Birth-Story of the Tiny Quail. Continuing, he said: "Monks, be united; engage not in disputes. For because of a dispute many thousands of quails lost their lives." And he told the Birth-Story of the Quails. (HOS 28.177)

It is not unreasonable to assume that this is an example of the Commentary referring to material with which the reader is already familiar.<sup>70</sup> When the whole text is given (usually as a Story of the Past), it is possible that not only will the reader know the story but may be able to discern where the Commentarial version differs. Thus, the advantage of presuming familiarity with the basic story is that certain features of the story can be emphasized in pursuit of asserting the Commentarial interpretation.<sup>71</sup>

#### i) The monks request a Story of the Past

Adapted material can also be introduced by employing motifs. For example, it is not uncommon in the Dhammapada Commentary for a group of monks to request to hear "the Past" (*atīta*):

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<sup>69</sup> A. K. Ramanujan (1991: 46) uses a metaphor of crystallization to describe how various "tellings" (as opposed to variants, versions) of the *Rāmāyaṇa* relate to each other. Each author dips into common cultural pool of plots, characters, names, incidents and relationships and brings out a new text with a unique texture and context.

<sup>70</sup> In this episode, the Buddha is trying to reunite a group of monks from Kosambi who have quarrelled.

<sup>71</sup> The story of Aṅgulimāla, the sadistic bandit-turned-Elder, appears to be so well-known that only the introductory sentence and end are narrated (DhpA iii 169-70). Burlingame actually inserts the text of the *Majjhimanikāya* version into his translation, presuming that his readers would be unfamiliar with it. (HOS 30.7-13).



Complying with a request of the monks, the Teacher related the following Story of the Past (HOS 30. 284)

and this enables the Buddha to relate the story of a previous existence of one of the frame story's protagonists. In the above, the Story of the Past is also found in a *Jātaka* tale. Once the tale has been related, the frame story is resumed. In such a formulaic situation, this group of monks is rarely identified. Members of the group are never identified individually and even their collective identity shifts between narratives. Vague characterizations are sometimes given in the narrative but in general it does not appear important to bestow a more specific identity on this group. This device serves to introduce material from other textual sources but with modifications to fit the context: sometimes only part of the *Jātaka* is related. The embedded *Jātaka* is kept firmly within definite boundaries, signified by certain formulaic phrases in the text, which define the extent of its influence.<sup>72</sup>

On Reid's fourfold typology of textual framing, the embedded tale constitutes both a heightened form of intratextual framing and a form of intertextual framing. Attention is drawn to a section of the text which is deliberately set apart from the rest by means of the formulaic introductory and closing phrases framing it.<sup>73</sup> Whilst the embedded text appears to be subordinated to the frame story and utilized to comment on the text enclosing it, it also functions to validate the frame story by providing an opportunity for further reinforcement from another textual location. The overall effect is to enhance the reader's mode of apprehending the text. In the following examples, the Story of the Past is not related but a title or textual location is given:

When the Teacher had thus spoken, the monks asked him to relate this Story of the Past. The Teacher accordingly related the Mandhātā Jātaka in detail. (HOS 30. 62)<sup>74</sup>

"At what time was that, Reverend Sir? Pray tell us the story." In response to their requests, the Teacher related a story of the past. (HOS 29. 99)<sup>75</sup>

Similarly:

<sup>72</sup> The boundaries of the embedded tale are formed by the monks requesting to hear a Story of the Past and the Buddha identifying the characters of the *Jātaka*.

<sup>73</sup> The reader is more acutely aware of this in Burlingame's translation. Burlingame actually sections off the Story of the Past and announces its beginning and end in bold type, as well as assigning it a number according to his arrangement of the stories. These features do not appear in Norman's edition of the Pāli text: the beginning of Story of the Past is indicated by a marker phrase such as *Atīte Bārāṇasīyaṃ* ... or simply by the word *Atīte*.

<sup>74</sup> cf. DhP iii 358, 409.

<sup>75</sup> In this case, the text cited is the *Khadiraṅgārājātaka* (J i 226-34; cf DhP iv 83-4, 96).

Beginning with these words, the Teacher related the whole story of the Elder's deed in a previous state of existence, beginning with his Earnest Wish in the dispensation of the Buddha Padumuttara. (The story is related in detail in the Sacred Text of the Elders)<sup>76</sup> (HOS 29. 199-200)

This particular variation presumes familiarity on the part of the reader with the *Theragāthā*. Given the background context of memorization of texts and oral recitation, it is not unreasonable to assume that readers would be able to identify the *Jātaka* on the basis of the *gāthā* alone. The end result is the same as if the tale were told in full: this type of framing has the effect of bringing to the attention of the reader another discourse, which is relevant to but does not supersede the current one.

A further variation of this indicates more explicitly the way in which the Story of the Past supplies the means whereby the reader apprehends the text:

Thereupon the monks asked him what he meant; *and in response to their request to make the matter plain*, he related the following Story of the Past. (HOS 30. 174; emphasis added)<sup>77</sup>

In his translation, Burlingame identifies *Jātaka* tales and those stories put into the mouth of the Buddha as Stories of the Past. By confining himself to *Jātaka* or *Jātaka*-style tales, he overlooks a number of other *atīta*. The Dhammapada Commentary also contains *atīta* in the form of narratorial asides:

At the conclusion of the Stanzas Little Wayman attained arahatship, together with the Supernatural Faculties, and with the Supernatural Faculties also a knowledge of the Three Pitakas. It appears that in a previous existence he was a king. Once, while making a ceremonial circuit of the city, with sweat pouring down his forehead, he wiped his forehead with a clean cloth, whereupon the cloth became soiled ... (HOS 28. 304)<sup>78</sup>

and an explicit connection is made between the two events.

Material for Stories of the Past is not limited to *Jātaka* tales and can also be found

<sup>76</sup> tam Therapāliyaṃ vitthāritam eva. Here *pāli* is used to designate the text rather than the language. In the conventional list of Pāli canonical texts, the text referred to here is the *Theragāthā* (Thag 94-6; cf ThagA iii 121-43).

<sup>77</sup> bhikkhūhi yācito tam atthaṃ pakāsetuṃ atītaṃ āhari (DhpA iii 445; cf. ii 152; iii 73; iv 66, 91, 198). Here the use of *attha* is of interest given its association with the hermeneutical enterprise in non-narrative parts of commentary, where it is not uncommon to find *attha* used to indicate the meaning of something:

Here the meaning of "he who is not stained" is he who is not stained within by the twofold desire, in him desire does not remain, him I call a brahman. (DhpA iv 167)  
(Tattha yo na lippatī ti evaṃ evaṃ yo abbhantare duvidhena pi kāmena na lippati, tasmim kāmo na saṇṭhātī tam ahaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vadāmi ti attho.)

It is possible that the device of the monks' request for the meaning to be explained amounts to an equivalent narrative form of the non-narrative commentarial formula above.

<sup>78</sup> The information about Little Wayman's past life is introduced by the particle *kira*.

in other texts and is employed in a similar manner:

“But, Reverend Sir, when was it that she prayed this prayer?” Do you wish to hear, monks?” “Yes, Reverend Sir, we wish to hear.” Thereupon the Teacher told them the following Story of the Past (HOS 29. 82)

and this enables the Buddha to relate the story of a previous existence of the female lay disciple Visākhā, also found in the Commentary on the *Āṅguttaranikāya*.<sup>79</sup>

The process of adaptation can also be observed between the stories of the Dhammapada Commentary. The introductions to several stories refer the reader to an earlier detailed telling:

The story has already been related in detail in the Commentary on the Stanza beginning with the words, *Whether it be in the village or in the forest*; for there it is said: (HOS 30. 303)

or relate the gist of the story, whilst referring to the previous one for style of exposition:

This story is similar to the proceeding, except that on this occasion the Teacher, perceiving that Elder Moggallāna the Great was free from Craving, pronounced the following Stanza ... (HOS 30. 303)

A request to hear a story is a device to embed a tale and as such is found throughout Indian narrative literature.<sup>80</sup> It is possible that a reader of the Dhammapada Commentary, familiar with other Indian narrative texts, would be able to identify the reference to these other texts. As Reid states, intertextual framing is more than simple allusion or adaptation because it indicates the way in which (the reader is to understand how) the text is to be seen in relation to other texts. One of the devices by which this type of framing is applied in the Dhammapada Commentary is through references to characters:

When the ogress came and stood before him, the Teacher said, “Why have you so done? Had you not come face to face with a Buddha like me, you would have cherished hatred towards each other for an aeon, like the Snake and Mongoose, who trembled and quaked with enmity, like the Crows and the Owls ... (HOS 28. 174)

The reference conjures up the two stories from the *Pañcatantra*.<sup>81</sup> Motifs can also

<sup>79</sup> Ps i 404-18.

<sup>80</sup> Penzer (1968/1: 11 et passim); Ryder (1949: 21 et passim).

<sup>81</sup> Book V (Ryder 1949: 341f); Book III (Ryder 1949: 231f)

function as intertextual framing. Whilst fanning Elder Saṅgharakkhita, a discontented monk speculates about his prospects upon returning to lay life and accidentally strikes the Elder on the head (DhpA i 303). This story also has a counterpart in the *Pañcatantra*.<sup>82</sup>

Intertextual framing has the effect of bringing to the reader's attention a different type of discourse, which has similarities to as well as differences from the current one, once again altering the reader's mode of apprehending the text and making it more difficult to assign a meaning to the text according to genre or type. (Reid 1992: 53). The references have the effect of modifying another discursive system, a hallmark of commentarial enterprise.

## ii) Monks' Discussion

Material from other textual locations is also introduced by another device involving the monks. It is usually the case that a request to hear a Story of the Past arises from a discussion amongst the group of monks. Certain features of this motif are noteworthy. The discussion usually takes place in the Dhamma Hall (*dhammasabhā*). PED describes this as a hall for the discussion of Dhamma.<sup>83</sup> No further details are recorded in the Dhammapada Commentary, except that at the Bamboo-Grove monastery in Kapilavatthu, the Dhamma Hall is connected by three passageways to the Perfumed Chamber (DhpA ii 46). In the majority of instances, the discussion takes place in the Dhamma Hall but other areas within the monastery are mentioned: State Hall (*upaṭṭhānasālā*); Assembly Hall (*asanasālā*, lit. 'Hall of Seats').

The monks are described as conversing while "seated together" (*sannisinna*). The discussion sometimes focuses upon some noteworthy aspect of an incident:

The monks began to discuss the incident in the Dhamma Hall: "Brethren, the Buddhas are marvelous! Venerable Nanda became dissatisfied with the Religious Life all because of Janapadakalyāṇī; but the Teacher, employing celestial nymphs as a lure, won him to complete obedience." The Teacher came in and asked them, "Monks, what is it you are sitting here now talking about?" (HOS 28. 223)

or something which the group of monks does not understand:

The monks began a discussion in the Dhamma Hall: "Elder Moggallāna the

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<sup>82</sup> the Brāhman's dream, Book V (Ryder 1949: 357f).

<sup>83</sup> Burlingame's rendering of this as 'Hall of Truth' is rather odd, especially as his usual translation of *dhamma* is 'Law'.



Great met death which he did not deserve.” At that moment the Teacher approached and asked them, “Monks, what are you saying as you sit here all gathered together?” (HOS 29. 306)

More commonly, the discussion highlights an element of the story:

Thereupon the monks began a discussion in the Dhamma Hall: “Brethren, how hard it must have been for the Supremely Enlightened One to make his breakfast of the cake of rice-flour which Puṇṇā cooked over a bed of coals and gave him!” At that moment the Teacher drew near and asked them, “Monks, what is it you are discussing now as you sit here all gathered together?” (HOS 30. 113)<sup>84</sup>

The Buddha joins the group of monks, taking the seat customarily prepared for him:<sup>85</sup>

The Teacher, perceiving that they were ripe for Arahatsip, went to the Hall of State, and seating himself in the seat already prepared for him, asked, “Monks, what is the present subject of discussion as you sit here together?” (HOS 30. 149)

The motif of the monks’ discussion forms the introduction of an embedded tale. More significantly, it constitutes a form of intertextual framing, since the same motif is found in canonical texts:

And in the early dawn a number of brethren assembled, as they rose up, in the pavilion; and this was the trend of their talk that sprang up among them, as they were seated there ... Now the Blessed One, on realising what was the drift of their talk, went to the pavilion, and took his seat on the mat spread out for him. And when he had sat down he said: ‘What is the talk on which you are engaged sitting here, and what is the subject of the conversation between you?’ (DB I 2)

It is clear that narrative material is adapted in the Dhammapada Commentary and that the different forms of adaptation are more than simply a matter of allusion to other Pāli texts. Framing processes illustrate how forms of adaptation are employed as a means of directing the reader’s mode of apprehending the text. For example, the monks’ discussion motif serves a threefold purpose. It offers the chance to reiterate some aspect of the story, which supports a particular interpretation and it presents an opportunity to resolve any lingering doubts in the mind of the reader. In this way, the

<sup>84</sup> This constitutes a summary of the plot and is usefully inserted at this point, since the reader is reminded of the events leading up to the pronouncement of the Dhammapada verse by the Buddha.

<sup>85</sup> Whenever monks are assembled, there is a seat already prepared for the Buddha (DhpA i 155-6). Another narratorial aside describes the way in which the seats for the Buddha and his followers are to be arranged (DhpA i 71-2).

text not only anticipates readers' questions but actively seeks to direct the understanding. The motif also serves to introduce material from other textual locations, similar to the monks' request for a story.

### Representation of Events

Another feature of narrative which lends itself to being viewed as a commentarial technique is the way in which events are represented in a tale. According to Prince, a narrative text can represent events in one of two ways: a tale can be told in chronological sequence or emphasizing a causal connection between events. In a tale which presents events in chronological order, events are recounted in the order of their occurrence ("The king died, and then the queen died"). In a tale which presents events in causal sequence, events are recounted in terms of their causal connection with each other ("The king died, and then the queen died of grief"). Prince draws this distinction in terms of story and plot. The story is "a narrative of events with an emphasis on chronology as opposed to plot which is a narrative of events with an emphasis on causality" (1991: 72, 91). Using this distinction, Prince is able to highlight the way in which events are presented in a given text and to identify the way in which this affects the reader. Prince proposes that on occasions where there is a difference between story and plot,<sup>86</sup> this may have the effect of highlighting certain events over others, underlining certain themes or may create suspense and as a consequence the reader's response to the narrative is affected (1982: 50).

Prince's view is dependent upon regarding narratives as presenting a succession of events. Reid rejects this view, arguing that it is an essentially restricted view of narrative, since it inhibits the opportunity to identify other operations at work in the text. For Reid, the type of sequencing that occurs in a narrative is a rhetorical activity:

The structure of a written narrative utterance can be seen more productively as a matter of rhetorical successivity (a substitutive shuffle of signifiers) than as a chain of actions, and correspondingly its enunciative aspect is better understood as a struggle to possess the meanings of what is told than as the mere capacity to impart a tale. (1992: 14)

For Reid, narrative sequencing is produced by substitutive movement of figures. Whilst a narrative appears to represent a succession of events, it is the *reader* who links events together causally through the attribution of a single attitudinal voice to the text. In effect,

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<sup>86</sup> Prince (1982: 49) further defines story as the narrated order (the order in which events occur/are said to occur) and plot as the narrating order (the order in which they are recounted).

a narrative represents events as successive, the artificial juxtaposing of events to give the appearance of movement:

It is this rhetorically produced illusion of narrative movement, not any plottable action, that gives space for the story to occur. (1992: 109)

One example from the Dhammapada Commentary should suffice to illustrate this. One of King Pasenadi's treasurers has died without issue and his wealth reverts to the crown. King Pasenadi describes the treasurer's miserly behaviour to the Buddha, who offers an explanation based upon his supernatural power to perceive the deeds the treasurer performed in a previous life (DhpA iv 76-80). This type of representation of events is frequently used in the Dhammapada Commentary. Ostensibly, the sequencing of events is causal: the treasurer's deeds are narrated after, even though they occur chronologically prior to, the appropriation of his wealth by the king. The treasurer's deed of a previous existence is related in order to explain the loss of his wealth after his death. Prince's view offers one line of analysis: the account of the treasurer's previous life is related to highlight features of the narrative of his present life. However, this analysis could apply equally to the same events represented chronologically — the treasurer's present life explains aspects of his previous life — and thus it could be argued that the order is not particularly significant.

This is not a consideration for Reid because he explains narrative movement as generated by the juxtaposition of events and the need to explain the gap which has occurred. However, Reid is able to explain more effectively why sequencing has different effects on the way in which the reader understands the narrative because he acknowledges the reader's role in the creation of the sequencing of events: the reader will attribute coherence to the text through framing activities and will be persuaded to regard the events as successive by the presence of a single narratorial voice. More importantly, through the use of intertextual framing, Reid is able to identify other structures in the narrative which influence the reader's interpretation. Versions of a narrative which present the same sequence of events can be compared to reveal differences in other narrative respects (Reid 1992: 56).<sup>87</sup> This approach has the advantage of not attempting to posit an implicit "original" version and offers a potentially fruitful line of enquiry in terms of the commentarial enterprise. Returning to the narrative of the Childless Treasurer, the Dhammapada Commentary account can be

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<sup>87</sup> This approach is echoed and reinforced by Propp:

To understand a bylina means to understand what the narrators wished to express in it and what they valued in it; two or three texts of each will not tell us much: all the extant texts must be collated and compared. (Propp 1984: 158)

compared with another version narrated elsewhere in Pāli literature. The *Samyuttanikāya* contains two accounts of the episode of the Childless Treasurer (S i 89-91; 91-3). Each one begins in the same way but continues with a different reply given by the Buddha to King Pasenadi. The first reply contains a generalized discourse, contrasting the improper and proper use of wealth, the main point being that sharing wealth with household and renouncers brings spiritual rewards:

But if a generous man [has] acquired a great fortune, he cheers and pleases (therewith) not only himself but also his parents, his wife and children, his slaves, craftsmen and servants, his friends and colleagues. He institutes offerings for recluses and brahmins stimulating spiritual growth, productive of future bliss, fruitful in happiness, conducive to celestial attainment. (KS I 116)

This is reiterated using a different form in the second account by demonstrating the connection between the treasurer's deeds and his rewards and punishments (S i 92).

In the Dhammapada Commentary account, this theme of the efficacy of almsgiving has a much greater degree of prominence. Rather than a generalized discussion as in the *Samyuttanikāya* account, the Dhammapada Commentary version is detailed and specific. The main point is summed up in the following words of King Pasenadi:

When the king heard these words of the Teacher, he said, "Reverend Sir, how grievous was the fault of this treasurer in that, while all of these good things yet remained to him, he neither used them himself, *nor wrought works of merit by presenting them in alms to a Buddha like you, residing in a monastery near at hand!*" (HOS 30. 241; emphasis added)

Here, not only is the emphasis upon the efficacy of giving alms made far more explicit but also the object of the generosity is also made more specific: the Buddha and Saṅgha, whereas in the *Samyuttanikāya* account, the recipients of alms are many and various: relations, employees, friends, recluses and brāhmans. Reiteration of this point is then made several times in the narrative through reinforcement, such as incorporating passages verbatim from the *Samyuttanikāya* account<sup>88</sup> and including further details, such as the reaction of the treasurer's wife:

The story goes that as this unbelieving simpleton spoke these words and went his way, his faithful believing wife thought to herself, "Verily it is a long time since I have heard the word 'Give' fall from the lips of my husband. To-day I will fulfill the wish of my heart and give alms." So taking the bowl of the

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<sup>88</sup> Early on in the episode, there is an explicit acknowledgement of the version modified by the Dhammapada Commentary: All is to be understood according to what has been shown in the sutta. (*sabbam sutte āgatanayen' eva veditabbam*, DhA iv 77). From this point, the account is modified in the Commentary.



Private Buddha and filling it with the choicest food, she presented it to him.  
(HOS 30. 240)

In both accounts, the treasurer's previous deeds are presented retrospectively: the Story of the Past detailing the treasurer's previous existences is told after the narrative detailing the Story of the Present.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the sequence of events is the same but in other respects the two accounts are different. The Dhammapada Commentary modifies the *Samyuttanikāya* account by giving greater emphasis to the theme of the efficacy of almsgiving to the Buddha and the Saṅgha and thereby offers a reworking of this particular episode, revealing this theme as a particular preoccupation. The reader's mode of apprehending the text is altered through intratextual framing (the insertion of an embedded tale) and through intertextual framing, which in this case involves explicit references to the *Samyuttanikāya* account. In the narrative, the Dhammapada verse is attributed to the Buddha, the source of authentication, the *Samyuttanikāya* discourse is invoked and then the interpretation subtly shifted.

#### i) Kamma and Personal Continuity

The use of retrospection in the representation of events in Pāli narrative literature raises the question of *kamma* and personal continuity. Returning to the example of the Childless Treasurer, it can be observed that events in the treasurer's life are being juxtaposed with events said to have occurred in a previous life. As well as dramatically illustrating the theory of *kamma*, this would appear to imply some sort of personal continuity. As Collins puts it:

There are, likewise, many kinds of Buddhist literature in which the identity and agency of monks are depicted as being those of recognizable, named individuals; ... In narratives, whether canonical or commentarial stories, *Jātaka*-s or *Apadāna*-s (stories of the past lives of the Buddha and of famous monks and nuns), or other texts, it is obviously a constitutive necessity that characters appear and act as persons, albeit persons whose karmic identity can be carried across different lifetimes. (1994: 69)

In the Dhammapada Commentary, characters from the Story of the Past are explicitly identified with those from the Story of the Present in *Jātaka*-style tales:

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<sup>89</sup> As well as retrospection, plot development can be anticipated: events are presented before they happen chronologically (Prince 1982: 49). Such predictions in plot development render the reader no longer anxious as to the outcome and indicate that reader is to focus on another aspect of the story. Reid regards prediction as "a device of strict control": whilst precluding other possible developments, such predictions are not always completely fulfilled (1992: 88).

Remaining in this state of existence during the term of life allotted to them, they were reborn in the World of the Gods, and passing from that state of existence in the dispensation of the present Buddha, that woman was reborn in the household of a tumbler, the man in the household of a treasurer. (HOS 30. 230-1)

For a character to be experiencing the fruit of a particular deed from a previous life, this would indeed appear to presuppose a notion of personal continuity. When monks request a story, it is sometimes made explicit that the subject of the story will be a previous deed of one of the protagonists:

“Monks, this is not the first time he has proved obstinate; he was obstinate also in a previous state of existence.” “We know all about his present obstinacy, Reverend Sir; but what did he do in a previous state of existence?” “Well then, monks, listen.” (HOS 28. 167)<sup>90</sup>

The identification is reiterated further at the end of the narrative when the characters of the previous life and the present one are shown to be the same:

When the Teacher had given this religious instruction, he said, “Monks, at that time the king was Ānanda, Devala was Tissa and Nārada was I myself; at that time also was he obstinate.” (HOS 28. 170)

This would appear to introduce an inconsistency within the corpus of Pāli literature, some of which is understood as espousing the idea is that there is no abiding self which is continually reborn and analyses the intentional aspect of *kamma*, whilst the rest appears to presuppose a transmigrating self. Collins has recognized the problem of the co-existence within a corpus of literature of texts, which presuppose seemingly contradictory understandings of self and proposes the following solution:

Within Buddhist thought, there is an apparently simple answer to the problem. Two levels or kinds of language and truth are distinguished: the conventional and the ultimate. It is true “ultimately” that there is no self, but “conventionally” it is possible to designate the temporary psycho-physical configurations of impersonal events we think of as persons by proper names, pronouns (including “I”), definite descriptions, and other means of reference. Buddhism thus has what Hume lacked: an explicit meta-theory which can account, in its own terms, for the co-existence of separate discourses of the self. In a characteristically Indian solution to a dilemma, two apparently incompatible alternatives are both kept but ordered into a hierarchy. (1994: 66)

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<sup>90</sup> cf. DhP A i 321; iii 67, 411.

Thus it is entirely appropriate for narrative *sutta* texts to describe a self experiencing rebirth, whereas *Abhidhamma* texts are concerned with the analysis of the impermanent self and therefore presuppose an understanding of not-self.<sup>91</sup>

Attempts to rationalize this apparent anomaly stem from the idea that narrative texts which contain the idea of a transmigrating self must be aimed at a popular level. Implicit in this view is the assumption that the notion of *anattā* is too sophisticated for lay audiences. However, on this view, it is hard to explain why, therefore, narrative texts such as the Dhammapada Commentary indicate an awareness of *khandha* and a “doctrinal” understanding of *anattā*. For example, a novice expounds the meaning of a portion of Dhamma:

... drawing the meaning and the matter from the Five Nikāyas, and analyzing the attributes of being as set forth by the Buddha: namely, the Aggregates of Being, the Elements of Being, and the Organs and Objects of Sense. (HOS 29. 158)<sup>92</sup>

None of these terms is elaborated upon and it is not unreasonable to suggest that it is assumed that the reader is familiar with these ideas. Rather than drawing the boundaries of the different discourses according to type of text as Collins’ position seems to imply, it can be shown that *within* a text, these two discourses are present. Thus, the fact that the Dhammapada Commentary does not address the issue of *anattā* by “philosophical analysis” does not mean that the notion has been abandoned. Since further elaboration would interrupt the flow of the narrative, lengthy philosophical discussion is not appropriate for this particular mode of discourse and so the notion is dealt with in a way which presupposes familiarity with the concept on the part of the reader. As a consequence, the view that the commentarial narratives are designed specifically for an unsophisticated lay readership is further discredited.

## ii) Personal Continuity and Narrative Movement

It would be ambitious to claim that the Buddha did *not* teach a theory of not-self yet it is difficult to find a completely unequivocal statement in Pāli texts to this effect.<sup>93</sup> Clearly,

<sup>91</sup> Collins goes on to analyse to which type of agency the discourse of not-self is applicable (1994: 67f).

<sup>92</sup> cf. Dhpa ii 31, 269; iii 113, 277, 378.

<sup>93</sup> Rather than claiming that *anattā* is not an integral part of the Buddha’s teaching, the point here is to suggest that it has been abstracted from context and perhaps unduly emphasized and this has led to the assumption that all the texts should or do presuppose the theory of not-self all the time. Scholars have commented on this:

Before modern times, some of the most distinctive ideas of Buddhist thought, such as the denial of an enduring self to an individual, were not usually seen as relevant to the lives of

it is one aspect of Buddhist theoretical discourse that has captured the imagination of scholars and students alike and has generated a discourse of its own in Western scholarship. Unfortunately, this enthusiastic preoccupation with interpreting the theory of not-self tends to overlook an important distinction: *anattā* only describes the nature of the self perceived *after* Buddhist realization. It is more reasonable to assert that the Buddha's theory of not-self, put simply, involves the idea that the self is a bundle of mental and physical attributes which transmigrates and that this process ends with Buddhist realization. Ample evidence in support of this is provided in the narratives. The collection of *Jātaka* tales demonstrate how the Buddha himself underwent hundreds of rebirths before he became enlightened. Thus, there is rebirth and personal continuity up to the point of becoming a Stream-Winner and then the number of rebirths decreases with each stage until arhatship occurs and there is no more rebirth,<sup>94</sup> as is illustrated by the narrative of Elder Candābha (DhpA iv 187-92). The Dhammapada Commentary presents the narrative of one of this character's previous lives first, detailing his existence as a forester who fashions a sandalwood moon-mandala for the shrine of the Buddha Kassapa. He is reborn in the World of the Deities and then in a Brāhman household of Rājagaha. From his navel shines a light like that of the moon. The commentary explicitly informs the reader that this is due to his former deed:

This, we are told, was the result of his making a moon-disk and placing it within the shrine. (HOS 30. 305)

He attracts a following of people who believe that they can gain certain powers by touching his body. When they encounter the followers of the Buddha, an argument ensues as to which teacher's power is greater. When Candābha enters the presence of the Buddha, his radiance disappears giving him the look of "a crow in a basket of charcoal" (HOS 30. 306). Anxious to learn the charm by which the Buddha makes Candābha's brilliance disappear, he becomes a monk. He is given the Thirty-two Constituent Parts of the Body as a subject of meditation and, once he becomes an arhat, he loses interest in his Brahman collaborators:

From time to time the Brahmans came to him and asked, "Have you learned the charm yet?" "Not yet, but I am learning it." In but a few days he attained Arahatsip. When the Brahmans came and asked him again, he made answer,

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laypeople. (Hallisey 1995: 46)

This calls into question the prominence given in some forms of Buddhist scholarship to the so-called philosophical texts as defining the Canon.

<sup>94</sup> Arhats can still experience the fruit of past deeds as is illustrated by the narrative describing the death of Moggallāna (DhpA iii 65-71).



“Depart ye! now have I reached the state of one who will never return.” (HOS 30. 306-7)

The Commentary gives an account of Candābha’s previous existences to reinforce the point that on becoming an arhat, rebirth is finished. The juxtaposition of previous existences with that of the present one gives the impression of a causal sequence. However, on closer analysis, it becomes clear that the sequencing generated by the interlinking of rebirths is deliberately constructed to highlight certain features of the narrative. The detail of his previous existences is given in order for the reader to note the rewards he earns for his meritorious donation as a forester. These lifetimes are deliberately juxtaposed to direct the way in which the reader comprehends the tale.

### iii) Narrative Movement and the Narratorial Aside

In the episode of the Childless Treasurer above, it was demonstrated how the reiteration of an event is used to highlight its significance to the reader. The rate at which the narrated events unfold can also be manipulated to alter the way in which the reader apprehends the text. For example, the formula most frequently used for the monks’ discussion is extended to include a lengthy description of the Buddha’s progress from the Perfumed Chamber to the Dhamma Hall. Burlingame captures the stateliness of the moment in his translation:

Now the Exalted One, knowing that they were discussing this matter in the Hall of Truth, thought to himself, “It is my duty to go to them this very moment.” Accordingly he arose from the Seat of the Buddha, put on his gloriously dyed under and upper garments, girded himself as with lightning, and over his shoulders, like a crimson blanket, threw the great robe of the Happy One. And coming forth from his richly fragrant Perfumed Chamber, and walking with the stride of a noble elephant in rut, with the incomparable grace of a Buddha, he proceeded to the Hall of Truth. And mounting the gloriously arrayed sublime Seat of the Buddha, and diffusing from his body the six-coloured rays of a Buddha, even as the sun, newly risen on the top of Mount Yugandhara, agitates the inmost depths of the sea, he sat down in the center of the seat.

Now the moment the Supremely Enlightened One arrived, the Congregation of Monks ceased their talk, became silent. The Teacher surveyed the assemblage with soft, kind heart and said, “This assemblage pleases my heart beyond measure. Not a single hand is out of place, not a single foot is out of place; not a cough is to be heard, not a sneeze is to be heard; all these monks, reverent with reverence for the Buddha, subdued by the majesty of the Buddha, though I were to sit here for an aeon and not speak, would refrain from speaking first, would not so much as open their lips,<sup>95</sup> I alone have a right to

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<sup>95</sup> A summary form of this part of the narratorial aside occurs elsewhere in the Commentary: cf. Dhpa iii 172:

decide when it is proper to begin to speak. Therefore I will speak first.”

Accordingly with a sweet voice, a voice like that of Great Brahma, he addressed the monks, “Monks, what is the subject of your conversation now, as you sit here all gathered together? What was the subject of the discussion<sup>96</sup> which you so suddenly broke off? (HOS 28. 305-6)<sup>97</sup>

Here the development of the plot has been slowed down so that the full glory of the Buddha’s magnificence can be absorbed.<sup>98</sup> According to the classification of the narratologist Prince (1982: 55f), this passage is one of five categories of narrative speed called a “stretch”, in which the narration of an event slowed down but not stopped. When the narrative comes to a complete stop, when there is no elapsing of narrated time, this is designated as a “pause”. This occurs frequently in the Dhammapada Commentary and can be seen to relate directly to the commentarial enterprise. The most visible manifestation of a pause is the narratorial aside, an explicatory statement, opinion or digression inserted into the tale:

Now as a certain shopkeeper sat in his shop with five hundred blankets spread out before him, a certain man passed by the door and seeing him, said to him, “Sir, there is a certain novice coming this way collecting blankets; you had better hide yours.” “Is he taking them as gifts or otherwise?” “He receives them as gifts.” “That being the case, if I wish to, I will give him blankets; if not, I will not. Go on your way,” and with these words he dismissed him. (Thus do dotting niggards begrudge people the gifts that others given them, even as did Kāḷa on beholding the incomparable gift of the king of Kosala;<sup>99</sup> and therefore are they reborn in Hell.)<sup>100</sup> (HOS 29. 154)

Narratorial asides can be straightforward explanations of names of characters and places or involve a more lengthy explanation of a certain feature of the plot:

(Thus [Tissa’s] gift of of a blanket to the Elder on the day he was given his

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Having so said, he sat down and remained silent. Likewise did also his hearers remain silent. When the Teacher is silent, neither men nor gods dare utter a sound. (HOS 30. 16)

<sup>96</sup> small talk (*antarākathā*, lit. “in between talk”).

<sup>97</sup> Compare the episode in which Elder Ānanda prepares to recite the *Ratanasutta*. The virtues of the Buddha and aspects of his life considered by Ānanda are detailed by the Commentary and the narration at this point is slowed down, drawing the reader’s attention to the significance of this event (DhpA iii 441). Compare also the narrative in which Sakka builds a palace for Jotika, the treasurer (DhpA iv 207-9).

<sup>98</sup> This feature of the narrative is similar to that of the verbal tableau in Indian epic literature, descriptive passages which dwell on the image of the divine characters. It has been explored with reference to the *Rāmcaritmānas* by Lutgendorf (1991: 312-3.)

<sup>99</sup> Burlingame here inserts “of the king of Kosala” (HOS 29. 154). The provision of this further information effectively forms a commentary for the benefit of his readership. The narrative describing the presentation of the incomparable gift to the Buddha by the King of Kosala is found elsewhere in the Commentary (DhpA iii 183-9).

<sup>100</sup> In his translation, Burlingame sets narratorial asides in parentheses.

name when he was seven years old resulted in his receiving one thousand blankets. In no dispensation other than that of the Buddha is the gift of a little productive of so much fruit, and a large gift productive of more abundant fruit. Therefore said the Exalted One, “Monks, this congregation of monks is of such sort that a little gift bestowed thereon produces much fruit, and a large gift yet more abundant fruit.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, as the result of giving a single blanket, the novice, although he was only seven years old, received one thousand blankets.) (HOS 29. 155)

Both passages are framed intratextually and intertextually by the reader. By introducing a pause in the development of the plot, the reader is being alerted to a significant feature of the narrative and is required to reflect along with the narrator upon the implications of this feature, the importance of almsgiving. The extract from the *Ānāpānasatisutta* (M iii 78-88) reinforces the idea that gifts given in this dispensation bring great rewards. As such it frames the text intertextually, bringing another discourse to the reader’s attention and modifying it in the light of the view of the Dhammapada Commentary.

As well as references to other texts, narratorial asides can also impart “doctrinal” information. In the narrative about the novice Tissa, Elder Sāriputta admits Tissa as a monk after having given him the first five of the constituent parts of the body as a subject of meditation. There then follows this comment:

(The entire Formula involves the recitation of all of the thirty-two constituent parts of the body, but those who are unable to recite all may recite the first five. The Formula in full is that invariably employed by all the Buddhas, but there is no limit to the number of monks and nuns and lay disciples both male and female who have attained Arahātship by meditating upon the hair and other parts singly. Inexperienced monks frequently make it impossible for their candidates to attain Arahātship. For this reason the Elder taught the boy only part of the Formula before receiving him into the Order, and then establishing him in the ten moral precepts.) (HOS 29. 153)<sup>102</sup>

Questions which may be occurring to the reader are anticipated in the Commentary:

(Now why was it that the Teacher caused the king to forget his question for seven days in succession? For she [Queen Mallikā] was dear to the king, the very joy of his heart. Therefore had the king learned that she had been reborn in hell, he would have said to himself, “If a woman endowed with faith so perfect has been reborn in hell after presenting offerings so abundant, what chance is there for me?” He would therefore have adopted wrong view, would have discontinued offerings of food to the five hundred monks and would finally have been reborn in hell himself. For this reason the Teacher caused him to

<sup>101</sup> This phrase occurs in the *Ānāpānasatisutta* (M iii 80). The use of the epithet *Bhagavā* rather than *Satthā* to refer to the Buddha, alters the reader’s mode of apprehending the text.

<sup>102</sup> cf. Dhpa i 327, 340-1, 364-5, 378, 380, ii 144-5, iii 93-4, 113-4.

forget his question for seven days in succession.) (HOS 29. 341-2)<sup>103</sup>

This time the reader's attention is demanded more explicitly by the text: the use of a direct question which is then answered by the narrator is designed to forestall or anticipate such questions on the part of the reader and thereby limit the interpretive options of the reader to ensure that the text is understood in a particular way.

## CONCLUSION

The application of Reid's fourfold typology of framing to the Dhammapada Commentary has produced new insights into the form of narrative as commentary, leading to an alternative evaluation of the text than has been proposed previously. By examining the way in which the text is framed by various interpretive communities, a set of subtle and sophisticated exegetical strategies has been revealed, indicating that a new appreciation of the value of commentarial narrative is now desirable. Through the process of the reader's framing activity, it has been shown how the physical environments of the text's presentation and the preconceptions about the nature of commentary (the ideas of interpretive communities about commentary derived from institutionalized reading practices, as well as preoccupations displayed in the Commentary itself) and the exegetical strategies, which are incorporated into the text itself and which reflect its purpose as commentary, require modification of the reader's apprehension of the text accordingly. It was also shown how types of framing overlap: the presentation of the text and translation by the Pāli Text Society and the Harvard Oriental Series is influenced by institutionalized reading practices, as well as particular perceptions of commentary. Similarly, adaptation is both a form of intratextual and intertextual framing: a narrative, which may be drawn from another textual location, is introduced and the reader's mode of apprehending the text is altered, illustrated, most particularly, by the embedded narrative.

Various techniques are employed in the Commentary to draw to the reader's attention certain parts of the narrative. For example, introductory sentences to each narrative provide the location and addressee of the verse attributed to the Buddha, an exegetical strategy which both authorizes the verses and situates the verses in the collection of authenticated texts. This is further reinforced in some narratives by the use of the phrase *anusandhiṃ ghaṭetvā*, a device which creates a direct association with the

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<sup>103</sup> cf. Dhpa i 395, 396-7, ii 199, iii 93, 155.



authority of the Buddha. In addition, material designed to underline a particular feature of an episode is introduced using the motif of the monks' discussion. It was observed that this is more than simply a matter of adaptation but requires that certain framing processes be brought to bear. Through intratextual and intertextual framing, further reinforcement of the Commentarial view is gained by the allusion to other sources and the reader's understanding of these is then confirmed or modified in accordance with the position of the Commentary. In this connection, the use of the narratorial aside can be seen as a more explicit way in which the reader's understanding of an episode is directed, particularly by anticipating queries a reader may entertain. Similarly, the representation of events also affects the way a reader apprehends a text. In the Dhammapada Commentary, the use of retrospection, pause, summary and stretch, highlights parts of the narrative above others to reiterate or reinforce a point of view, revealing a particular textual preoccupation with views.

The narrative portions of the Dhammapada Commentary are not merely "legends and folktales" but can themselves be seen to form the main constituent of the Commentary. Indeed, the evocation of the response, *pītipāmojja*, in the Prologue draws attention to the particular nature of the Commentarial narrative compared with other types and, more significantly, is an indication of the interaction between text and community, identified as by Graham as the sensual dimension of scripture.

## CHAPTER FOUR

“JOY AND DELIGHT TO THE MINDS OF THE WISE”<sup>1</sup>INTRODUCTION

In discussing the influence of Unitarianism on Harvard moral philosophy in the nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> Howe writes that Unitarians viewed literature as a source for cultivating feeling and thereby moulding religious character. Heightened emotional sensitivity gave rise to “the progressive regeneration of personality” (1970: 195). The emotions awakened by literature were carefully contrived: they were not understood to be “turbulent masters” but as “elevated sentiments” and subordinate to rational and moral ends (1970: 197). Howe goes on to suggest that, in effect, there was created a rhetoric, a “science of persuasion”, in which intellectual argument was supplemented by the judicious stimulation of the emotions (1970: 196).

A similar view could be taken of the role of emotion in the Dhammapada Commentary. It is stated explicitly in the Prologue that the text has been compiled to evoke particular forms of response from the reader and structures or formats can be identified in the narratives, by which the reader’s interpretative options are reduced. That the manipulation of emotion can be seen to have a rhetorical effect is found within the narratives themselves and there are several instances in which an emotional response to the Buddha’s narration is outlined:

The Teacher related this *Jātaka*, detailing his own deed in a previous existence and while he was speaking, everyone wept profusely because they were soft-hearted and in a receptive state. Then the Exalted One expounded the truths, knowing it would be of benefit to them. At the end of the discourse, the Brahman, together with his sons and daughters-in-law, became Stream-Winners. (DhpA iv 15)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter appear in a paper entitled “Sentiment in Pali Narrative Literature”, delivered at the XIth Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, Mysore, India, January 1995. An earlier version of the paper was presented to the XIth Congress of the International Society of Buddhist Studies, Mexico City, October 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Howe notes that characteristic of the Harvard moralists in discussions of aesthetics, ethics and religion was the tendency to establish objective truths by means of reason and then set about cultivating an appropriate emotional response to such “facts” (1970: 194).

<sup>3</sup> *Satthari imaṃ attano pubbacariyaṃ āharitvā kathente kathente yeva sabbe va te assudhārā pavattetvā muduhadayā ohitasotā bhaviṃsu. Atha nesaṃ Bhagavā sappāyaṃ veditvā saccāni pakāsesi. Desanāvasāne saddhiṃ puttehi c’ eva suṇisāhi ca brāhmaṇo sotāpattiphale patiṭṭhahī ti.*

In this episode, the audience listening to the *Jātaka* related by the Buddha is deeply moved by what is heard. It is explicitly described how the Buddha then takes advantage of the audience's receptive state to expound a discourse and, as a result, members of the audience become *sāvaka*. In this respect, a mechanism, resembling that outlined in the Unitarian view, is revealed, whereby the evocation of emotion constitutes the means by which spiritual development is achieved. However, it cannot be inferred from the narratives that a similar view of the relationship between emotion and reason is presupposed, nor can it be assumed, given the primacy accorded to the evocation of responses in the Prologue, that emotional responses are employed in a supplementary role to reasoned discourse.

A more fruitful line of analysis is to regard the presence of emotional responses in the Dhammapada Commentary as indicative of the relationship between text and community. It has been noted that a body of texts does not arise in isolation from a community and equally important to Graham's understanding of a text as scripture are emotional and physical responses evoked by sacred texts, such as:

... a surge of joy or sorrow; a feeling of belonging or even of alienation; a sense of guidance or consolation (or the want of either); or a feeling of intimacy with or awesome distance from the divine. (1987a: 7)

It has already been demonstrated how the responses in the Prologue are associated directly with the Buddha by claiming that "joy and delight" were evoked when the Buddha pronounced the verses of the Dhammapada and that this serves as a validation strategy, contributing to the overall authentication of the text. The subsequent claim that the same responses are to be evoked by the Commentary constitutes an indication to the reader not only of the close connection made between verses and narrative commentary but also of how the Commentary is to be framed intertextually.

#### FURTHER INTERTEXTUAL FRAMING IN THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

##### Prologue

The prologue to the Dhammapada Commentary ends with what could be construed as a declaration of aesthetic intent:

Having translated the words in between (the verses), I will relate that remaining portion, bringing joy and delight to the minds of the wise in the meaning and application (of the teaching). (DhpA i 2)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ... *sesaṃ tam eva atthato bhāsantarena bhāsiṣsaṃ āvahanto vibhāvinaṃ manaso pītipāmojjaṃ atthadhammūpanissitan ti*. The prologue to the *Dīpavaṃsa* also describes *pītipāmojja* as the effect of paying attention to the work (Dīp 2-3) and, in the Prologue to the *Visuddhimagga*, it is stated that the

The hope is expressed that, as the result of reading the Commentary, readers will experience “joy and delight” (*pītipāmojja*).<sup>5</sup> There is quite clearly some purpose in specifying the kind of response anticipated from the audience. It is possible that this constitutes an attempt to reproduce the response associated with the Dhammapada, for, earlier in the Prologue, there is the statement:

With heart roused by the force of compassion, the Teacher taught the glorious *Dhammapada*, which truly magnifies the joy and delight of both deities and humans. (DhpA i 1)<sup>6</sup>

Here joy and delight as a response is aligned with that which it is claimed was initiated by the Buddha when he taught the verses of the Dhammapada.<sup>7</sup> The specification of the kind of response anticipated from the reader is reinforced by linking it with other recognized modes of response. Such an exegetical strategy can be seen as a method of conferring legitimacy upon the text and to avoid the material being viewed as “aimless talk” (*tiracchānakathā*).

In addition, the reference to joy and delight as a response to the Dhammapada enables the reader to frame the text intertextually, by alerting the reader to a number of other locations in which joy and delight arise. In the Prologue, there are further clues to the nature of such locations. It is hoped that joy and delight will arise in the minds of the wise in connection with the meaning and application (*atthadhamma*) of the teaching. A similar statement occurs in a discourse from the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, in which the Buddha outlines the “five circumstances for release” (*pañca vimuttāyatanāni*).<sup>8</sup> The first circumstance is when a monk who is being taught Dhamma by the Buddha, partakes of the “meaning and application” of Dhamma and experiences first delight and then joy.

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text is composed to produce delight (*pāmojja*). In addition, at the end of every chapter in the *Visuddhimagga*, there is the statement that the chapter has been composed “for the purpose of delighting good people (*sādhujanapāmojjatthāya*)” (Vism i 58). Here, the similarity of purpose with the Dhammapada Commentary prologue is striking.

<sup>5</sup> This feature is to be found elsewhere in Indian narrative literature. Sanskrit narrative texts contain a list of rewards for listening (*phalaśruti*) to the text. Dundas has observed a similar feature in the Jain commentarial tradition. Jain commentators did not regard themselves as just expounders of texts:

... for them scriptural exegesis seems to have been a means of conferring merit upon those who heard or read it. As such, commentary could be linked by its practitioners with that compassion which informs the Jain conception of true religiosity. (1996: 78)

<sup>6</sup> ... *Satthā dhammapadam subham desesi karuṇāvegasaṃussāhitamānaso yaṃ ve devamanussānaṃ pītipāmojjavaḍḍhanaṃ.*

<sup>7</sup> There is no such statement in the Dhammapada and this is indicative of the Commentarial enterprise of establishing the circumstances of authentication for the verses.

<sup>8</sup> These are hearing Dhamma, teaching Dhamma, repeating Dhamma, pondering or reflecting upon Dhamma and correctly grasping a concentration sign (A iii 21f).



His mind becomes completely calmed, he experiences happiness (*sukha*) and his mind is composed by concentration.<sup>9</sup> Framing the Commentary intertextually with the *Āṅguttaranikāya* passage, the reader will observe the reference to joy and delight in connection with “meaning and application”, thereby altering the mode of apprehension of the Commentary.

### Response in a Ritual Context

However, the evocation of joy and delight in the Prologue may not necessarily conjure up the *Āṅguttaranikāya* passage but rather one or more of a number of other contexts. In a narrative from the Dhammapada Commentary, it appears that joy arises on hearing the Buddha teach Dhamma. A Brahman and his wife possess only one upper garment between them so that when one of them leaves the house, the other must remain indoors. When they hear that there is to be teaching at the monastery, they agree to take it in turns to attend. The Brahman goes at night to hear the preaching and as he does so, he experiences the five sorts of joy (*pañcavaṇṇapīṭi*) which suffuse his whole body (DhpA iii 1).<sup>10</sup> The fivefold joy is explained in detail by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga*. He lists the different kinds of joy which make up the fivefold joy, in the context of describing the stages of mental purification required in preparation for meditational practice. Each type of joy has a distinctive physical effect: minor joy (*khuddhikā pīṭi*) produces horripilation; momentary joy (*khaṇikā pīṭi*) is like flashes of lightning on the body; flooding joy (*okkantikā pīṭi*) washes over the body repeatedly like waves breaking on the seashore; transporting joy (*ubbegā pīṭi*) generates the ability to levitate and all-pervading joy (*pharaṇā pīṭi*) fills the body until it is like a full bladder (Vism i 143-4).

Narrative examples are used to amplify the discussion of fivefold joy in the *Visuddhimagga*. In one such narrative, a pregnant woman is asked to remain at home while her parents go to hear Dhamma. She can see the shrine and hear the sound of the monks’ chanting and the following thought occurs to her:

‘How lucky they are to be able to go to the monastery and wander round such a shrine terrace and listen to such sweet preaching of Dhamma!’ (PPn 150)

Her body is filled with joy and she soars into the air, arriving at the monastery before

<sup>9</sup> The description of the effects for the other “circumstances of release” is identical.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately for this brahman, he is still struggling to overcome selfish thoughts and the spiritual attainment he receives at the end reflects this.

her parents. Her parents do not appear to be puzzled by her presence but rather by the swiftness of her journey. The woman explains:

‘As I was standing looking at the shrine in the moonlight a strong sense of happiness arose in me with the Enlightened One as its object. Then I knew no more whether I was standing or sitting, but only that I was springing up into the air with the sign that I had grasped and I came to rest on this shrine terrace.’ (PPn 150)

This episode is used to illustrate “transporting joy”, one of the five kinds of joy. The woman experiences joy with the Buddha as object, in the context of meditational practice (grasping a concentration sign).<sup>11</sup> Joy is described as occurring in a ritual context,<sup>12</sup> as part of preparatory purification of the mind, preceding stages of meditation.<sup>13</sup> A reader of the Commentary will frame the text intertextually in the light of such descriptions of “joy founded on the Buddha” (*Buddhārammaṇapīṭi*).

#### i) The Recollections

In the narrative, the pregnant woman’s experience of “transporting joy” is founded on the Buddha and, in this respect, it is not dissimilar from the practice of Recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*).<sup>14</sup> According to the *Visuddhimagga*, there are ten

<sup>11</sup> The fifth circumstance of release is when a monk correctly grasps a concentration sign (A iii 23–4).

<sup>12</sup> Further examples indicate that joy is experienced in a ritual context. The qualities of the Buddha can be taken as a subject for meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For example, the *Sammohavinodanī* (VbhA) contains an account of how a monk, with his meditation subject in mind, prepares to go on an almsround by paying homage at the shrine and wisdom tree. If his meditation subject is Recollection of the Buddha, then he can ascend to the shrine-terrace (*cetiyaṅgaṇa*) directly but if he has another meditation subject, he must lay it aside at the foot of the staircase, “as though it were goods carried in the hand”, acquire “joy founded on the Buddha” (*Buddhārammaṇapīṭi*) and only then can he enter the shrine terrace. After completing the worship, he collects the meditation subject from the place where he deposited it and enters the village for alms with the meditation subject uppermost in his mind (VbhA 349). In another narrative from the *Sammohavinodanī*, an elder in whom the Outflows have been extinguished, goes to pay homage at the Mahācetiya and Mahābodhi. As soon as he sees the shrine he arouses joy founded on the Buddha and pays homage (VbhA 292).

<sup>13</sup> Buddhaghosa states that all-pervading joy is one of the conditions which makes it possible to achieve the threefold concentration (Vism i 144) and is said to be the root of ecstatic concentration (*appana samādhi*). This association with different types of *samādhi* is also found in the *Sammohavinodanī*. Here, the joy enlightenment factor (*pīṭisambojjhanga*) arises and pervades the whole body up to access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) of one who recollects the qualities of the Buddha (VbhA 282).

<sup>14</sup> Practice of the Recollections involves the repetition of the qualities of various objects such as the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha. Instances of this practice can be discerned throughout Pāli narrative literature. For example, in a *Jātaka* narrative, which incorporates “joy founded on the Buddha” and Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, a lay follower (who is a *sāvaka*) is on his way to the Jetavana when he reaches the shore of the Aciravatī river and discovers that the ferrymen are not available. He cultivates joy founded on the Buddha and begins to walk across the river. When he reaches mid-stream, he notices the waves, his joy falters and he begins to sink. Having successfully

Recollections and the first six are dealt with as a group in Chapter Seven, part of an extended exposition of various forms of meditation. A section of the chapter is devoted to each Recollection and the discussion of each Recollection is framed by a quotation, identified by Ñāṇamoli, in his translation, as an extract from a canonical passage (PPn 206-44). Not only do the quotations from *sutta* literature function as a formula recommended for developing each Recollection but also allow the reader to frame the *Visuddhimagga* intra- and intertextually and thereby confirm or modify understanding of such passages.<sup>15</sup> Each word or phrase is then glossed together with additional commentary, followed by a description of the benefits for a monk who practises the Recollections. Instances of the practice of the Recollections can be found throughout the narratives in the Dhammapada Commentary and their presence is suggestive of the way the Commentary can be framed intertextually by the reader.

#### a) Recollection of the Buddha

It is explained by Buddhaghosa that *Buddhānussati* is mindfulness with the Buddha's virtues as object. The recommended formula for developing *Buddhānussati* is identified by Ñāṇamoli as occurring in the *Vatthūpamasutta* (M i 37):

That Blessed One is such since he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with [clear] vision and [virtuous] conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed. (PPn 206)<sup>16</sup>

Ñāṇamoli also cites another location in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A iii 285), indicating that there are a number of locations which are possible sources of intertextual framing. The Dhammapada Commentary narratives contain examples of the practice of *Buddhānussati* but it is not always the case that the same formula is given.<sup>17</sup> For example, a youth avoids being devoured by ghouls after practising Recollection of the Buddha (DhpA iii 455-60). In this narrative, the youth and his friend are accustomed to playing a ball game together. His friend always wins because he practises

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regained it, he arrives at the other shore. He recounts his experience at Jetavana and the Buddha is prompted to tell of an occasion in which safety was ensured by practising Recollection of the Three Jewels (J ii 111-3).

<sup>15</sup> In the Pāli edition itself, the source of the quotation is not given. Rhys Davids provides her own references in a footnote.

<sup>16</sup> Rhys Davids (1920: 198 n1) cites a passage (D i 49) from the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D i 47-86).

<sup>17</sup> Another example of the practice of *Buddhānussati* is Kappina (DhpA ii 120). Also found is the practice of calling to mind the qualities of the Buddha (DhpA iii 441).

*Buddhānussati* as he throws the ball.<sup>18</sup> The other youth resolves to learn the formula, so he too can win some games. One day, while his father is searching for his straying oxen, the youth remains behind to guard the waggon. That night, while he is sleeping under the waggon, two ghouls (*amanussa*) from a nearby burning ground come upon him and while they are arguing over the morality of whether or not to devour him, the youth wakes up and shouts out the formula “*Namo Buddhassa*” and one of the ghouls, identified as the holder of wrong view, receives a fright:

But in spite of the efforts of the orthodox believer to prevent him, the holder of false views disregarded his words, and taking hold of the youth by the feet, tried to drag him away. At that instant, as the result of the youth’s familiarity with the practice of Meditation on the Buddha, the youth exclaimed, “Praise be to the Buddha!” Thereupon the evil spirit, terrified with great fear, stepped back. (HOS 30. 180)

In this example, a different formula is used in the Commentary but it is nevertheless identified as *Buddhānussati* (DhpA iii 457). Similarly, in addition to the ten epithets which constitute the formula for Recollection of the Buddha, the *Vimuttimaggā* lists a number of other means by which an individual can practise Recollection of the Buddha. Most notable amongst these is the inclusion of *Jātaka* narratives which illustrate the virtues of the Buddha practised during previous lives:

He revealed the birth stories of the time when he was a Bodhisatta, in order to encourage others to gain the light. He was born a hare and practised charity. One should recollect on virtue through the Saṅkhapāla birth story; on renunciation, through the Mahā-Govinda birth story; on fortitude, through the Khanti birth story; on truth, through the Mahā Sutasoma birth story ... (Ehara 1961: 144)

This phenomenon also features in an episode from the Dhammapada Commentary, in which Ānanda has been called upon to recite the *Ratanasutta* to rid Vesālī of ghouls after a severe famine (DhpA iii 436-49). He stands at the gate of the city and calls to mind the qualities of the Buddha (*buddhagune āvajjivā*) and then episodes from the Buddha’s life from the Great Resolve to the Enlightenment:

The Elder received the Jewel Sutta from the lips of the Teacher, took water in the Teacher’s stone bowl, and then went and took his stand at the gate of the city. And standing there, he meditated on all the Merits of the Buddha, beginning with his Resolve; considering in turn the Ten Perfections of the Tathāgata, the Ten Minor Perfections, and the Ten Major Perfections; the Five

<sup>18</sup> cf. the narrative which describes a woman who pronounces similar phrase after sneezing or coughing (DhpA iv 161), discussed below.



Great Sacrifices; the Three Meritorious Acts, in behalf of the World, in behalf of his kinsmen, and for the sake of Enlightenment; his descent into the Womb in the last state of his existence; his Birth; the Great Retirement, the Great Exertion, his conquest of Māra on the Throne of Enlightenment, his attainment of Omniscience, and the Nine Transcendent Conditions. And when he had so done, he entered the city and during three watches of the night went about within the three walls of the city reciting the Jewel Sutta as Protection. (HOS 30. 171)

It appears that Ānanda calls all this to mind as a preparatory purification of his mind for an effective recitation of the *Ratanasutta* once he has entered the city.

#### b) Recollection of Dhamma

In the *Visuddhimagga*, the recommended formula for Recollection on Dhamma is given as:

The Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, visible here and now, not delayed (timeless), inviting of inspection, onward-leading, and directly experienceable by the wise. (PPn 230)

Ñānamoli cites locations in the *Majjhima-* and *Anguttaranikāya* as the sources for this quotation (M i 37; A iii 285).<sup>19</sup> In a narrative from the Dhammapada Commentary (DhpA iv 93-5), the Buddha's announcement of his imminent *parinibbāna* has different effects upon the monks: the spiritually unadvanced are unable to stop weeping and the spiritually advanced experience profound shock. However, the announcement makes one monk, Dhammārāma, determined to become an arhat and he sets about achieving this by practising Recollection of Dhamma:

For Dhammārāma thought to himself, "The Teacher has announced that four months hence he is to pass into Nibbana, and I have not yet freed myself from the bondage of desire. Therefore so long as the Teacher remains alive, I will struggle and attain Arahantship." Accordingly, Dhammārāma went about by himself, considering and calling to mind the Law preached by the Teacher. (HOS 30. 249)<sup>20</sup>

The narrative describes how Dhammārāma removes himself from company in order to

<sup>19</sup> Rhys Davids (1920: 213 n2) identifies this phrase as part of the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* (D ii 72-168). In this sutta, the Buddha describes how an *ariyasāvaka* can discern that he is so by the "Mirror of Dhamma" (*Dhammādāsa*), which involves practising Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha and Virtue (D ii 93-4).

<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note the degree of urgency conveyed by describing the Buddha as *Satthā dharmāno*, indicating the view that the crucial time for gaining spiritual achievement occurs when there is a living Buddha in the world.

practise Recollection on Dhamma and, as a result, his fellow monks report his strange behaviour to the Buddha, enabling his behaviour and thus the practice of the Recollections, to be vindicated in the usual way. This is reinforced in the narrative when Dhammārāma is described as not free from passion (*avītarāgo*). This echoes the reason which the Buddha gives in the *Dhajaggasutta* (S i 218-20) for practising the Recollections: an individual becomes, like the Buddha, free from passion, anger and ignorance (*vītarāga vītadosa vītamoha*).

#### c) Recollection of the Saṅgha

Ñānamoli identifies Buddhaghosa's citation of the formula for *Saṅghānussati* as a discourse from the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A iii 286),<sup>21</sup> in which the Saṅgha is portrayed as the most worthy recipient of lay patronage:

... this community of the Blessed One's disciples is fit for gifts, fit for hospitality, fit for offerings, fit for reverential salutation, as an incomparable field of merit for the World. (PPn 237)

In his exposition, Buddhaghosa reiterates this view and quotes from the Dhammapada<sup>22</sup> in support of his position. The Commentary on this verse (DhpA ii 232-3) expounds upon this theme exactly: the nephew of Sāriputta is asked whether he does good deeds and, on replying that he tends to the sacrificial fire in order to attain the Brahma-world, he is taken by Sāriputta to hear the Buddha's view and he learns that the merit accruing from tending the sacrificial fire for a hundred years is not equal to that from honouring a follower of the Buddha, even for a moment (DhpA ii 232).<sup>23</sup>

#### d) Recollection of Virtue

Buddhaghosa specifies that an individual who wishes to develop Recollection of Virtue (or of Generosity or of Deities) must do so in private:

One who wants to develop the recollection of virtue should go into a solitary retreat and recollect his own different kinds of virtue in their special qualities of being untorn, etc., as follows: (PPn 240)

<sup>21</sup> Rhys Davids gives other locations within the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (1920: 218 n5).

<sup>22</sup> This is identified as verse 107 by both Rhys Davids and Ñānamoli.

<sup>23</sup> This narrative forms one of a series of three, variations on the theme that offerings to the Saṅgha are more worthwhile than the pursuit of Brāhmanical ritual or gifts to other groups of renouncers, here specified as the Nigaṇṭhas. This is an important issue in the Dhammapada Commentary and will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

and a short quotation, identified by Ñāṇamoli as a passage from the *Āṅguttaranikāya* (A iii 286), is cited.<sup>24</sup> This aspect of the practice of the Recollections is illustrated in a narrative from the Dhammapada Commentary (DhpA ii 256-60). A monk named Sappadāsa has become discontented and decides to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. He goes to a quiet place where his action will not be witnessed and, as he is standing against a tree with the blade against his windpipe, he surveys his conduct since his full profession and finding it to be flawless, his whole body is suffused with all-pervading joy:

... he reflected upon his conduct from the time of his full profession, and perceived it to be flawless, even as the spotless disk of the moon or a cluster of transparent jewels. As he surveyed his conduct, a thrill of joy suffused his whole body. (HOS 29. 248)<sup>25</sup>

The narrative describes how as a result of practising Recollection of Virtue, Sappadāsa experiences one of the five kinds of joy and goes on to become an arhat.

It seems that the practice of Recollection of Virtue does not always occur in private. In one narrative from the Commentary, Sāriputta is called upon to recite his own virtues before a company of monks (DhpA ii 178-82). The narrative describes how a monk has conceived a grudge against Sāriputta and fabricates an accusation that Sāriputta struck him a blow.<sup>26</sup> Before an assembly of monks, Sāriputta does not protest his innocence but instead takes the opportunity to recite his own virtues.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the spiritually unadvanced monks weep profusely and the spiritually advanced monks experience a profound shock. The formula is reworked in the Commentary by transferring the recital into the public domain so that the beneficial effects can be

<sup>24</sup> Rhys Davids notes additional references from the *Majjhima-* and *Saṃyuttanikāya*, as well as a different location from the *Āṅguttaranikāya* (1920: 221 n2).

<sup>25</sup> DhpA ii 257; cf. iv 172.

<sup>26</sup> At this point, the narrative anticipates the development of the plot. Moggallāna and Ānanda predict that this will provide an opportunity for Sāriputta to roar a lion's roar:

Thereupon Elder Moggallana the Great and Elder Ānanda thought to themselves, "The Teacher does not know that our oldest Brother did not really strike this monk; the Elder will roar a lion's roar." (29. 304)

Burlingame's translation follows the majority of manuscripts by rendering *Satthā no jānāti* as "The Teacher does not know" (reading *na* for *no*). This does not make sense given the way the Commentary focuses on the supernatural powers of the Buddha's perception and the following translation is suggested: "Our (*no*) Teacher knows that our older brother did not strike this monk", since the two Elders then convoke the company of monks in order for the matter to be dealt with publicly and for the recital of Sāriputta's virtues to benefit more than just the offending monk — the narrative ends by recording that 9000 monks became arhats with the Discriminations.

<sup>27</sup> A detailed description of Sāriputta's virtues in terms of nine similes is given in the Commentary (DhpA ii 179), by which the reader frames the text intratextually and the mode of apprehending the text is altered.

experienced by a greater number of individuals.

#### e) Recollection of Generosity

In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa notes that a precondition for the practice of Recollection of Generosity is a disposition towards giving. The Buddha was presented with a meal which caused him to become ill and eventually die. In the commentary on the *Udāna* account (Ud 81-5) of this episode (UdA 399-407), there is elaborated a wish from the Buddha that Cunda not be considered responsible for his death. It describes how there are two occasions in the life of a Buddha in which gifts of alms yield great fruit and blessings to the donor: before a Buddha becomes enlightened and before the death of a Buddha. For the Buddha Gotama, the first was given by Sujātā and the second by Cunda. In this way, the fatal implications of the gift are, to a certain extent, sidestepped and the account reiterates this by continuing that Cunda practised Recollection of Generosity after making his gift and, as a result, experienced profound joy.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Udāna* Commentary, the formula for practising Recollection of Generosity used by Cunda is given in an abbreviated form,<sup>29</sup> identified in Ñāṇamoli's translation of the *Visuddhimagga* as a quotation from the *Āṅguttaranikāya* (A iii 287):<sup>30</sup>

It is gain for me, it is great gain for me, that in a generation obsessed by the stain of avarice I abide with my heart free from stain by avarice, and am freely generous and open-handed, that I delight in relinquishing, expect to be asked, and rejoice in giving and sharing. (PPn 242)

The direct connection between textual location, response and spiritual development is made explicit in the account from the *Udāna* Commentary.

#### f) Recollection of Deities

In order to practise Recollection of Deities, Buddhaghosa makes it clear that a person should call to mind the faith, virtues, learning, liberality and understanding of the deities followed by those that exist in himself, with the result that his mind is not invaded by passion, anger and ignorance (*Vism* i 225). The passage cited is identified both by

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<sup>28</sup> Sujātā is described in the text as experiencing the same response as the result of her gift (UdA 406).

<sup>29</sup> Only the first line or part of the first line is given. It is not unreasonable to assume that the canonical passage referred to by this phrase would be well-known to the reader.

<sup>30</sup> Rhys Davids gives an alternative location in the *Āṅguttaranikāya* (1920: 223 n3).



Ñāṇamoli and Rhys Davids as an extract from the *Anguttaranikāya* (A iii 287), which details the names of celestial realms and general qualities of deities who reside there. The Dhammapada Commentary contains several narratives which describe the virtues of a deity. In one such (DhpA i 362-6), a goddess is reborn in Sāvathī whilst decking with flowers her husband, Mālabhārī. She makes an Earnest Wish to be reborn with her former husband and, in the meantime, leads an exemplary life, looking after a community of monks. One day the monks come to the *vihāra* and finding that none of the duties have been performed, they wonder where Patipūjikā is:

“Where is Husband-Honourer?” said they. “Reverend Sirs, how could you expect to see her? Yesterday at eventide, after your reverences had eaten and departed, she died.” Thereupon monks who had not yet attained the Fruit of Conversion, *remembering her kindly services to them*, were unable to restrain their tears; while monks who had attained Arahatsip were *overcome with religious emotion*. (HOS 29. 48; emphasis added)

Patipūjikā has been reborn in the Celestial Realm of the Thirty-Three (*tāvatisadevaloka*) and reunited with her husband Mālabhārī. In the *Visuddhimagga*, it is made clear that the six recollections are only effective for *sāvaka* (Vism i 226)<sup>31</sup> and in the above example, the grief of spiritually unadvanced monks, who recall Patipūjikā’s actions, is contrasted with the effect that the event has on the spiritually advanced: they experience profound shock, not because Patipūjikā is dead but as part of Recollection of Deities,<sup>32</sup> revealing that responses generated by particular situation can be experienced by those with the highest form of spiritual attainment.

## ii) Effects of the Recollections

At the end of each section, the benefits for a monk who practises the Recollections are described:

When a bhikkhu is devoted to this recollection of the Buddha, he is respectful and deferential towards the Master. He attains fullness of faith, mindfulness, understanding and merit. He has much happiness and gladness [pītipāmojja]. He conquers fear and dread.<sup>33</sup> He is able to endure pain. He comes to feel as if

<sup>31</sup> However, it is stated later that it is possible for the spiritually unadvanced to practise the Recollections and experience the same responses and benefits. It appears that another view has been preserved in the text at this point (Vism i 227-8).

<sup>32</sup> This becomes clearer with the addition of *saṃvijjamāne*, which has been omitted in Ñāṇamoli’s translation (1956: 244). It should read:

As long as in the prior stage he recollects the deities’ special qualities of faith, etc., and in the later stage he recollects the special qualities of faith, etc., existing in himself, being stirred up, then “On that occasion his mind is not obsessed by greed, or obsessed by hate, or obsessed by delusion, his mind has rectitude on that occasion,” with reference to the deities.

<sup>33</sup> Amongst the manifold benefits of practising the Recollection of the Qualities of the Three Jewels is the ability to overcome fear and dread (*bhayabheravasaha*). In the *Dhajaggasutta* (S i 218-20), the Buddha instructs those who meditate in solitary places to call him to mind, using the formula for

he were living in the Master's presence. And his body, when the recollection of the Buddha's special qualities dwells in it, becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room. (PPn 230)

There are similar descriptions given for the other Recollections<sup>34</sup> and in all of the descriptions, joy is one of the effects of practising the Recollections. Elsewhere, joy is cited as an effect of practising the Recollections:

... indeed, Mahānāma, the noble follower feels enthusiasm for the meaning and application of the teaching, feels delight associated with the teaching; joy arises in one so delighted; for one whose mind is joyful, the body is quiescent; one whose body is quiescent experiences happiness; the mind of the happy one is concentrated. (A v 329<sup>35</sup>; cf A iii 21)

The successive stages of the mind's purification are also given (Vism i 212-3)<sup>36</sup> and the aim of practising the Recollections to achieve a mind which is purified, allowing for further meditational practice, becomes apparent.<sup>37</sup>

The passages recommended for practising the Recollections have been identified by Ñāṇamoli and Horner as occurring in a number of canonical locations. This reveals not only a great deal about the way in which these two scholars have framed the Visuddhimagga intertextually, but also the extent to which material from textual locations is incorporated into spiritual practice.

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Recollection of the Buddha, if they feel the onset of fear and panic (S i 219). If the meditator is unable to call to mind the Buddha, then he can call to mind Dhamma or the Saṅgha using the recognized formulae. It is possible to overcome fear and dread because contemplation of one who is free from passion, anger and ignorance, generates a mind which is not tainted by these obstacles to concentration. This is illustrated by a story from the Dhammapada Commentary. Having chosen to meditate in a forest grove, a group of monks is disturbed by strange noises and mysterious illnesses. They discover that the source of the disturbance is from the resident forest deities, who have been forced to frighten the monks into leaving the forest or otherwise abandon their homes. The Buddha teaches the monks the *Mettasutta* and the recitation generates such goodwill that the two groups dwell harmoniously in the grove (DhpA i 313-8).

<sup>34</sup> Vism i 218, 221, 222, 224, 226.

<sup>35</sup> ... *kho pana Mahānāma ariyaśāvako labhati atthavedaṃ, labhati dhammavedaṃ, labhati dhammūpasamhitāṃ pāmujaṃ, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pītimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vediyati, sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati.*

<sup>36</sup> The mind becomes free from passion, anger, ignorance and upright (*ujugata*) with the Buddha as object. Once the hindrances have been discarded, applied and sustained thought on the Buddha's merits is possible, giving rise to joy. Bodily and mental sufferings subside through repose, bringing mental and physical bliss and a composed mind with the Buddha as object. The factors of enlightenment arise simultaneously as far as access concentration (*upacāra samādhī*).

<sup>37</sup> Harrison advances the theory that practice of the Recollections is designed to purify the mind in advance of trance-meditation. He suggests that underlying Buddhaghosa's discussion is the theme of what is considered to be wholesome and beneficial to spiritual progress (1992: 217).

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXT AND RESPONSE

The presence of the responses joy and delight in the Prologue to the Dhammapada Commentary suggests how the reader is to view the text in relation to other texts. Through the application of intertextual framing by the reader to the text, the significance of the invocation of joy and delight as responses to the Commentary is revealed and the nature of the relationship between the text and its interpretive communities begins to emerge. In the narratives of the Dhammapada Commentary, it becomes apparent that the Buddha plays a significant role in the connection between text, response and community.

### Anupubbikathā

*Anupubbikathā* is a type of teaching given prior to an exposition on Dhamma. It is glossed in both canonical and commentarial works as:

... talk on giving, talk on moral habit, talk on heaven, he explained the peril, the vanity, the depravity of pleasures of the senses, the advantage in renouncing them. (BD IV 23; cf. Dhpa i 6)

and it is variously translated. Horner notes the occurrence of “progressive talk” in a formulaic passage in connection with conversions (1951: 23 n1) and indeed, *anupubbikathā* does occur prior to conversions in some narratives. However, Horner does not include those narratives which are explicitly stated to be *anupubbikathā* themselves.<sup>38</sup> These are usually narratives about individuals perceiving the futility of worldly life and renouncing the world or about individuals who indulge in actions which bring them misfortune.<sup>39</sup> Lamotte favours a rendering of *anupubbikathā* as “gradual teaching”, that of three discourses aimed at lay audiences, in the same way as he believes the *sutta* are intended only for monks (1958: 84n42) but he does not offer any evidence in support of this claim. John Strong argues against the view that *anupubbikathā* is designed for a lay audience:

It is sometimes claimed that these preliminary edifying tales were all that was ever preached to the laity, while the Dharma proper was reserved for monks. This, however, is simply not the case, there being many instances in which

<sup>38</sup> “On this matter, there is an *anupubbikathā*” (Tatrāyaṃ *anupubbikathā*, Dhpa i 83; cf. i 88, 160, 337; ii 112; iii 302; iv 120, 199).

<sup>39</sup> For example, King Udena and his three wives (Dhpa i 160f); the vengeful Viḍūḍabha (Dhpa i 337f); the generosity and goodness of Puṇṇa and his daughter, Uttarā (Dhpa iii 302f).



laypersons were taught both. Nonetheless, it is true that occasionally Buddhist preachers would decide not to expound immediately upon the Dharma proper, but to limit themselves to the preliminaries and wait until their listeners had demonstrated their readiness for further instruction. (1992: 95-6)<sup>40</sup>

While Strong is of the view that *anupubbikathā* consists of didactic material, he does draw attention to another factor: *anupubbikathā* is a form of preliminary instruction and the teaching of Dhamma is dependent upon state of mind of recipient. The element of the Buddha's ability to perceive the dispositions of mind of the potential convert is elaborated in a narratorial aside from the Dhammapada Commentary:

Now when the Buddhas preach the Law, they have regard to the predispositions of their hearers for the Refuges, the Moral Precepts, and Retirement from the World. Thus they always preach the Law with reference to the disposition of mind of each individual. When, therefore, the Teacher preached the Law on that day, he had regard to Mahā Pāla's predispositions. And he preached in orderly sequence, expounding one subject after another; to wit, Almsgiving, the Moral Precepts, Heaven, the evil consequences and folly and defilement of Sensual Pleasures, and the blessings of Retirement from the World. (HOS 28. 148)<sup>41</sup>

Burlingame's rendering as "orderly sequence"<sup>42</sup> captures the sense of the gloss offered by Buddhaghosa that *anupubbikathā* consists of a number of topics which are expounded successively.<sup>43</sup> However, the view that *anupubbikathā* is a type of graduated teaching is not supported in the texts:<sup>44</sup> the three types listed do not constitute a progression towards more spiritually elevated subjects but serve as a means by which an individual's mind is prepared for hearing Dhamma. Common to narratives which feature *anupubbikathā* in connection with conversion is the necessity for the Buddha to produce state of mind in an individual before the teaching of Dhamma can take place and one way in which this is achieved is through the exposition of certain introductory topics, collectively known as *anupubbikathā*. Thus, *anupubbikathā* is a form of initial sequential instruction. This is illustrated by a *Mahāvagga* narrative (Vin i 15-18), in which Yasa, the son of a merchant, one day becomes disillusioned with worldly life

<sup>40</sup> Strong also refers Lamotte's identification of "specialists in folklore" (*tiraścakathika*) with reciters of *anupūrvikathā*, on the basis of evidence from the *Divyāvadāna* (1985: 865).

<sup>41</sup> cf. Nandagopāla (DhpA i 323-5). The narrative describes the Buddha as delivering *anupubbikathā* on understanding Nanda's knowledge to have ripened. Burlingame's rendering is rather free here.

<sup>42</sup> Burlingame tends to regard *anupubbikathā* as type of Dhamma but it seems that *anupubbikathā* occurs before Dhamma proper is taught, once it is clear that the individual is ready.

<sup>43</sup> The idea of succession or sequence is stressed in a gloss offered in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (Sv i 277), in the sense of one element following on from another.

<sup>44</sup> This can only be construed as a projection on the part of translators, constructing a perceived hierarchy of spiritual matters. Here the influence of extratextual framing can be discerned.



and leaves his father's palace.<sup>45</sup> The narrative records how he encounters the Buddha, who prepares his mind with *anupubbikathā* before teaching him Dhamma:

When the Lord knew that the mind of Yasa, the young man of family, was ready, malleable, devoid of hindrances, uplifted, pleased, then he explained to him the Teaching on Dhamma which the Awakened Ones have themselves discovered: ill, uprising, stopping, the Way. (BD IV 23)<sup>46</sup>

Yasa rejects his life of luxury to seek a remedy for his malaise and sets off to find a teacher. Arriving at the Deer Park, he is introduced to the Buddha's teaching through *anupubbikathā*, which is followed by an exposition of Dhamma, once the Buddha has perceived his readiness. The presence of *anupubbikathā* in narratives involving conversion indicates that the response experienced by individuals plays a crucial role in spiritual development. That some of the narratives in the Dhammapada Commentary are *anupubbikathā* themselves reveals that the text is to be regarded as also serving to generate such responses.

#### A Buddhist Aesthetic?<sup>47</sup>

Lamotte notes that, of the three discourses which constitute *anupubbikathā*, the third is designed to soften, release, excite and calm the mind of the hearer.<sup>48</sup> It is tempting, in this light, to view this in the context of an aesthetic response. It is clear from the Dhammapada Commentary that certain forms of narration generate certain type of response. In one instance, a younger brother tells his older sibling about his gift of sugar cane to a *paccekabuddha* and as a result of his narration, the older brother is thrilled with joy (DhpA iv 201). In another example, Jambuka listens to the narration of his previous rebirth by the Buddha and he is deeply shocked (DhpA ii 61). Both types of response, joy (*pīti*) and shock (*saṃvega*), arise in specific situations and are thus to be differentiated from the more mundane pleasure (*tuttihi*) or distress (*domanassa*). In the *Vatthūpamasutta*, a situation is described in which a monk, with mind free of the defilements, practises Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha and experiences first delight (*pāmuja*) and then joy (*pīti*). In a gloss offered in the

<sup>45</sup> This occurs at the beginning of the *Mahāvagga*, which is devoted to the biography of the Buddha from after his enlightenment. The narrative uses similar motifs as those frequently used in Pāli narratives to describe the circumstances of Prince Siddhattha's resolve to leave his palace in search of the answer to his existential questions.

<sup>46</sup> cf. the narrative of Suppabuddha the Leper (Ud 49).

<sup>47</sup> My thanks to Paul Dundas for suggesting this line of analysis.

<sup>48</sup> "... le troisième assouplissait, libérait, exaltait et pacifiait la pensée de l'auditeur." (1958: 84)

*Papañcasūdanī*, the particular nature of such joy is elaborated:

*Joy is born to the one greatly delighted* means through this delight of the one greatly delighted, joy free from sensual desires is born. (Ps i 174)<sup>49</sup>

The joy experienced by the monk is thus of a particular kind: it is not regarded as a response connected with the world of attachment but is conducive to the path to spiritual attainment.

The particularity of such responses generated under specific circumstances suggests a form of technique: in meditational contexts, the cultivation of joy through practice of the Recollections contributes to the process of the purification of the mind preceding meditational practice. In the *Anguttaranikāya* passage (A iii 21f; cf M i 36f) outlining the “five circumstances of release”, a form of technique is suggested by the sequence of emotions leading to spiritual attainment, where delight (*pāmojja*) features as the first emotion experienced in a sequence up to concentration (*samādhi*). The monk experiences first delight and then joy (*pīti*). As a result he becomes calm and experiences happiness (*sukha*). In the Commentary on this passage, *pāmuja* is glossed as “tender joy” (*taruṇa pīti*), suggesting a progression on to *pīti* (Mp iii 230).

According to Pandey, from an early period in India, aesthetics dealt mainly with technique. Pandey, who regards drama as the most appropriate context in India for a discussion of aesthetics, asserts that the purpose of dramatic representation was instruction, the moral improvement of the audience:

It does not directly command, but it makes the audience experience the goodness of virtuous path, through identification with the focus of the dramatic situation. (1959: 17)

Spiritual advancement appears to be an aim common to many texts in India. At the end of the *Saundarananda*, the poet Aśvaghoṣa declares that he has been writing about liberation (*mokṣa*) under the guise of poetry, in order to appeal to an audience still for the most part entangled in sensual pleasure and unconcerned with spiritual welfare (1969: 4). According to Masson and Patwardhan, Abhinavagupta employed the theory of *rasa*<sup>50</sup> to show that states of mind during religious and literary experiences are

<sup>49</sup> *Pamuditassa pīti jāyati ti iminā pāmojjena pamuditassa nirāmisā pīti jāyati*. In the *Manorathapūraṇī* (Mp iii 230), joy is glossed as “intense joy which is born from the state of being pleased” (*tutthākārabhūtā balavapīti*).

<sup>50</sup> *Rasa* theory was developed by Abhinavagupta who wrote commentaries to Bhārata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* and Ānandavardhana’s *Dhyanāloka*. The power to taste *rasa* is a reward for merit earned in previous existences.

similar, in order to counter opposition to poetry from philosophers. For Abhinavagupta, the principal exponent of *rasa*, this emotional experience is always the “bliss of the self” (*ātmānanda*), whether the text is religious or literary.

In Pāli texts, however, there is no formalised system of aesthetic appreciation comparable with the *rasa* theory elaborated by Abhinavagupta.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of responses, such as joy and delight as an integral part of practising the Recollections or contemplating a meditation subject, suggests, at the very least, that rather than just ordinary emotions, joy and delight are specific responses, part of a set of responses which contribute significantly to progress on the path to spiritual attainment. In a broader context, the presence of such responses functions as an index of the interaction between text and community, revealing the nature of its sensual dimension of scripture.<sup>52</sup>

#### THE NATURE OF RESPONSE IN THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

##### The Cultural Construction of Emotion

The construal of responses found in Pāli narratives as aesthetic responses presupposes a particular view of aesthetics and emotions. Given the predominance of reason and objectivity in the Western tradition, it is not surprising to find the emphasis placed in discussions of aesthetics upon the tension between the emotional and rational aspects, such as the following from the New Encyclopedia Britannica:

On the one hand, aesthetic experience is rooted in the immediate sensory enjoyment of its object through an act of perception. On the other, it seems to reach beyond enjoyment toward a meaning that is addressed to our reasoning powers and that seeks judgement from them.

This extract illustrates a feature that several scholars writing on emotion have observed:

<sup>51</sup>Gokhale reaches this conclusion by a different route. Observing a paradox in the presence of great works of art and “anti-hedonistic” tendencies in Buddhism, he suggests that, whilst beauty of form is found as an aid to spiritual progress, any elaboration into a theory of aesthetics would be a diversion from the primary purpose of monastic life (1994: 93)

<sup>52</sup>The connection between text and salvific knowledge is discussed by Narayanan, who contends that the commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli*, a ninth century CE Śrīvaiṣṇava Tamil poem, are not designed to elaborate a theological discussion about the god Viṣṇu but the texts are constructed in order to preserve the flavour of the Ālvārs’ enjoyment of poem and thereby, the community re-lives and re-experiences the emotions of these poet-saints (1992: 90).

that in the separation of reason and emotion in Western discourse, reason is elevated above emotion,<sup>53</sup> due in part to the way in which reason is used to evaluate actions.

In the introduction to her study of the Ifaluk view of emotion, Lutz reviews Western theoretical conceptions of emotion (1988: 53f) and concludes that an essentialized view of emotion has predominated in Western discourse and has, in different ways, determined the way in which emotion in other cultures is understood.<sup>54</sup> Lutz categorically dismisses the view that there is a universal emotional experience:

... emotional experience is not precultural but *pre-eminently* cultural. The prevalent assumption that the emotions are invariant across cultures is replaced here with the question of how one cultural discourse on emotion can be translated into another. (1988: 5)

and proposes that the essentialist view of emotion be challenged in favour of examining the role played by social and cultural influences in shaping theories of emotion (1988: 4).

In her fieldwork, Lutz discovered that the Ifaluk conception of emotion is based upon a set of different assumptions. Rather than regarding emotion as a private, inner experience, emotions are experienced in the context of social relationships:

... the use of emotion concepts, as elements of local ideological practice, involves negotiation over the meaning of events, over rights and morality, over control of resources — in short, involves struggles over the entire range of issues that concern human groups. ... Once de-essentialized, emotion can be viewed as a cultural and interpersonal process of naming, justifying, and persuading by people in relationships to each other. (1988: 5)

Lutz argues that by considering the social and cultural forces, it becomes clear that the concept of emotion has an ideological function:

In particular cultures and contexts, emotion words may be used to theorize about events, to moralize about or to judge them, and to advance one's interests by defining the situation in a particular way. Thus, the calling up of a scenario by the speaker of emotion words is done in particular contexts for particular ends, to negotiate aspects of social reality and to create that reality. (1988: 10)

and she concludes that while it is true to say that emotion words are commonly used to

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<sup>53</sup> Lutz (1988: 76f); Lynch (1990: 4f); Nussbaum (1990: 41).

<sup>54</sup> Lutz explains that there is an inherent element of comparison: emotion in other cultures is either the same, different or unrecognisable as emotion but more significantly, this has been rarely acknowledged in Western discourse about emotion, due to the tendency to regard emotional experience as universal (1988: 215f).



describe the relationship between the self and the world, it is important to acknowledge that cultural differences arise, due to the extent to which the self or the world is at the centre of theory and the degree of autonomy attributed to the individual (1988: 223).

This observation has a direct bearing upon the way in which emotion is presented in Pāli narratives, since an ambiguity arises regarding the translation of the terms *citta* and *manas*. These terms occur frequently in the Dhammapada Commentary in compounds with emotion words such as *tutṭha-*, *haṭṭha-*, *kupita-*, *utrasta-*, as well as *pasanna-*. Burlingame translates *citta* as “mind” or “heart” depending on context:

The Elder preached the Law to the treasurer and his wife, proclaiming the virtues of the Three Jewels. Beginning with the words, “Almsgiving is the true sacrifice,” he made the fruit of almsgiving and of other works of merit as plain as the moon in the sky. As the treasurer listened to him, his heart believed [pasannacitto] (HOS 29. 52)

As the result of the wholesome food they received, their minds became tranquil [cittaṃ ekaggam]; and as the result of tranquility of mind, they developed Spiritual Insight and attained Arahathship together with the Supernatural Powers. (HOS 29. 4)

In these two passages, *citta* is rendered as “heart” in a context of emotion and faith, whereas in the context of cool spiritual attainment, it becomes “mind”, thus reflecting Burlingame’s own culturally determined conception. While recognizing that particularly in general terms, *manas* and *citta* are used synonymously in conjunction with body, the Pāli-English Dictionary does, however, draw a distinction between the two in terms of the rational (*manas* as intellect) and the emotional (*citta* as heart). Some scholars have attempted to capture the elusive meaning of the terms *citta* and *manas*.<sup>55</sup> According to Sugunasiri (1995), the fluidity in the conceptualization of *citta*, *manas* and *viññana* (which he renders as consciousness) in the *Nikāya* results in semantic inconsistency: sometimes the words are used synonymously, at others they appear to have shades of meaning. This fluidity, Sugunasiri argues, enabled commentators such as Buddhaghosa to formulate the view that the heart (*hadaya*) is the “seat of consciousness”. However, he continues, this is not the same as the view of the Buddha, as reconstructed by Sugunasiri from *Nikāya* passages, which appears to infer that the mind is not localized in a single organ but pervades the whole body. On this basis, he concludes that the “post-Buddhian” [sic] tradition is erroneous. Whilst there is great merit in a notion of

<sup>55</sup> Collins (1982) renders *citta* as “mind” and *manas* as “thought”, preserving an entirely mental location for the terms. Harvey is more specific and offers “mind-organ” (*manas*) and “mind-set” (*citta*). Harvey states that in some contexts, *citta* can mean “mind-set” in general and it is in this sense that it approaches in meaning, heart, which he describes as “the seat of the emotions” (Harvey 1995: 112).

mind which does not posit a heart-mind distinction along the lines of the western tradition, the force of Sugunasiri's argument is somewhat undermined by his insistence upon attributing a unified notion of mind to the Buddha.<sup>56</sup>

It becomes clear that the part of the problem lies in the different ways that emotions are conceptualized between cultures. Heelas observes that the tendency in the Western tradition is to "psychologize" emotions by characterizing them as inner experiences. In other cultures, emotions are "somatized": they are perceived to be located in the body but not, however, understood as belonging to organs (1986: 243-4).<sup>57</sup> In a similar vein, Harré (1986: 8) notes that while emotions are characterized by bodily agitation, emotion words are not names for the agitation, since the same agitation can be involved in many different emotions. This is borne out in the narratives of the Dhammapada Commentary. The physical effect of the five types of joy has already been noted and it can be seen that the experience of shock (*saṃvega*) produces a similar effect. For example, on hearing that Kapila is to be reborn in the Avīci Hell, a crowd of onlookers are so stirred up (*saṃvigga*) that their body hair stands on end (DhpA iv 42). Similarly, a monk is stirred up by a courtesan's provocative behaviour and experiences a shock which affects his whole body (DhpA ii 201). The Buddha perceives that the monk is stirred up as the result of the courtesan's erotic exhibition and takes the opportunity to teach Dhamma to the monk, who then becomes an arhat. The contrast is between the monk's appropriate reaction of *saṃvega* and the courtesan's display of inappropriate conduct (*anācārakiriya*). The Buddha teaches Dhamma because the monk is in a receptive state rather than to rescue him from possible temptation.<sup>58</sup> Comparison with the example of the crowd stirred up by hearing of Kapila's rebirth destination, shows that the Buddha takes similar action and the text makes the reason more explicit:

At that moment the Exalted One, perceiving the appropriate conduct of mind [cittācāra] of the company there assembled, preached the Law in a way suiting the occasion ... (DhpA iv 42)

<sup>56</sup> Not only does this view presuppose a particular view of the relationship between canon and commentary but it also does not take into account that the teaching style of Buddha, adapted to suit each individual, reinforces fluidity and inevitably throws up inconsistencies in and between texts. It is the purpose of the Commentaries to impose a structure on *Nikāya* teaching in accordance with their particular interpretative positions. Hence, the Commentaries are not "erroneous" but reflect the need to be perceptibly different from other interpretations and this inevitably involves a degree of systematization.

<sup>57</sup> In effect, the tendency is to externalize emotions (Lynch 1990: 22), an idea picked up by Harvey. In describing the nature of *citta* as to be tamed, he recalls how the monk Tālpuṭa (Thag 1107-42) addresses his *citta* as though it were a person (1995: 112). Book Three of the Dhammapada Commentary is entitled *Cittavagga*. It contains narratives of monks being controlled by their thoughts but without the degree of anthropomorphising that Harvey ascribes to *citta*.

<sup>58</sup> Burlingame's interpretation of this episode gives the impression that the monk becomes excited by the behaviour of the courtesan and that is why the Buddha intervenes (HOS 29. 217).

Thus *saṃvega* creates a frame of mind in the individual which is conducive to understanding Dhamma and thereby, spiritual development.<sup>59</sup>

### Emotion as the Basis for Action

It is more difficult to preserve a dichotomy between rational and emotional in the understanding of narratives which involve conversion episodes, since decisions concerning spiritual welfare are made on the basis of a specific emotional response to the teaching of the Buddha. Nussbaum returns to the Greek philosophers, in particular Aristotle, to argue for the view that there is a correlation between rather than a separation of rationality and emotion, because, for Nussbaum, emotions are:

... more reliable in deliberation than detached intellectual judgments, since emotions embody some of our most deeply rooted views about what has importance, views that could easily be lost from sight during sophisticated intellectual reasoning. (1990: 42)<sup>60</sup>

Nussbaum wishes to argue that emotions are a form of judgement and that decisions, made on the basis of emotion, have a cognitive value. In her 1992 Gifford Lectures, Nussbaum described how, in Greek and Roman narratives, emotions are viewed as a type of reasoning or judgement. An emotion is an evaluative recognition that ascribes to external things and persons beyond the agent's control great importance for the agent's own flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Nussbaum draws attention to the fact that for the Greek philosophers, emotions were not simply uncontrollable sensations:

For they all held that emotions are not simply blind surges of affect, recognized, and discriminated from one another by their felt quality alone; rather they are discriminating responses closely connected with beliefs about how things are and what is important. (1990: 41)

Thus, for Nussbaum, emotions can be cognitive without being propositional. This view

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<sup>59</sup> The Pāli construction here is interesting in that *saṃvega*, the emotion, appears in the nominative case and "arises" in the person, rather than the person feeling the emotion, which would be the expression in English: for example, *maḥāsaṃvego uppajji* (DhpA ii 11); *maḥāsaṃvego udapādi* (DhpA iv 197) and *pīti uppajji* (DhpA iii 1). Similarly, a body is "pervaded by joy" (*pītiyā phuṭṭhasarīro hutvā*, DhpA ii 94). Thus, in the Pāli, an individual does not feel the response but it happens to them. This is not easy to convey in English without clumsiness.

<sup>60</sup> Rosaldo goes further and claims that emotions are "embodied thoughts", experienced as various types of physical impressions (1984: 143).

has been recognised by other scholars. Lynch has also observed that emotions are the names given to feelings experienced in the appraisal of situations and are integrally involved in decision-making processes (Lynch 1990: 10). However, Nussbaum advocates a further modification:

A central purpose of these essays is to call into question this view of rationality and to suggest, with Aristotle, that practical reasoning unaccompanied by emotion is not sufficient for practical wisdom; that emotions are not only not more unreliable than intellectual calculations, but frequently are more reliable, and less deeply seductive. (1990: 40)

Nussbaum suggests that, at least for the ancient Greeks, the conventional understanding of the relationship between reason and emotion is reversed.

#### i) “Confidence” and Conversion

The view that emotions can be understood as the basis for decision-making has interesting implications for narratives in the Dhammapada Commentary which contain instances of conversions. Confidence (*pasāda*) is found throughout canonical, commentarial and sub-commentarial literature. The *Mahāvamsa* contains a prologue which outlines how the work came to be composed and an exhortation to the audience to react in a particular way on hearing it:

Attend ye now to this (*Mahāvamsa*) that is free from such faults, easy to understand and remember, arousing serene joy and emotion and handed down (to us) by tradition, — (attend ye to it) while that ye may call up serene joy and emotion (in you) at passages that awaken serene joy and emotion. (Geiger 1912: 1)<sup>61</sup>

Geiger’s rendering of *pasāda* as “serene joy” is one amongst several possibilities: “clearness, brightness, purity; joy, satisfaction, happy or good mind, virtue, faith; repose, composure, allayment, serenity” (PED); “faith” (Burlingame 1921); “confidence” (Horner 1954). *Pasāda* frequently occurs in connection with *citta* or *manas*, in the compounds *pasannacitta* and *pasannamānasa*. This association, as well as the syntactical occurrence with the locative case, has led some scholars to the conclusion that *pasāda* means faith in the Buddha. The following is Horner’s translation of a passage from the *Vimāṇasakasutta* (M i 317-20):

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<sup>61</sup> Different kinds of response from those mentioned in the Prologue to the Dhammapada Commentary are given here and it is noticeable how the connection between text and response is explicitly highlighted.



As, monks, the Teacher gradually teaches *dhamma* to the monk, from further to further, from excellence to excellence, what is dark and what is bright with their counterparts, so does he gradually by his superknowledge of point after point of *dhamma* come to fulfilment in *dhamma*. He has confidence in the Teacher, that; 'the Lord is a fully Self-Awakened One, well taught is *dhamma* by the Lord, the Order fares along well' (MLS I 381-2)

It could indeed be argued that the apparent credal nature of the phrase stating the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha does indicate that this is a declaration of faith. However, it is then more difficult to explain the emphasis on the gradual understanding of the teaching, leading up to the affirmation of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. As the monk comprehends more of the teaching for himself, then his certainty in the effectiveness of the teaching is confirmed by his experience. In effect, the affirmation amounts to a statement that what the Buddha teaches and the way he teaches is efficacious for spiritual attainment, indicated by the list of attainments acquired during this process. Since there is an emphasis upon encouraging followers to test the teaching for themselves, then it is more consistent to align *pasāda* with Buddhist practice than "faith", which has connotations of not needing to be tested by experience.<sup>62</sup>

Gokhale, arguing for a bhakti influence in early Buddhism, states that *pasāda*, amongst other terms, is a synonym for *saddhā* and that while *saddhā*, in turn, is translated as confidence, the overriding emphasis for "the common layman or laywoman" (1981:19) is devotion (*bhakti*):

These lay devotees announced their special status in relation to the Buddha, his *dhamma* (doctrine) and the *samgha* (order), on the basis of their seeking shelter (*sarana*) in the Three Jewels. Such a "conversion" was an act of faith which is the major constituent of the attitude called *bhakti*. (1981: 16)

Leaving aside the vexed question of what constitutes monastic and lay practice and the assumption that taking refuge in the Three Jewels amounts to an act of faith or "conversion", there is some merit in Gokhale's argument, considering what is known of the nature of the environment in which early Buddhism existed: the texts describe a number of other teachers with groups of followers, each espousing variations on similar sets of teachings. However, Gokhale does not offer a convincing statement in support of his thesis that cannot be explained by an alternative interpretation.<sup>63</sup> For

<sup>62</sup> Collins (1982: 89) argues for a more precise rendering of *saddhā* as "confidence (in the truth of doctrines not personally experienced)". *Pasāda* here can be taken to mean "confidence in the truth of doctrines not personally experienced".

<sup>63</sup> Gokhale's claim that the presence of emotional responses signals the presence of bhakti requires

example, Gokhale argues that the use of a large number of different adjectives to describe the Buddha means that *Nikāya* literature is like *stotra* literature. It could also be argued that this reflects the tendency in Indian languages to use epithets. This may well be undertaken to emphasize the superhuman nature of the Buddha but this does not necessarily imply a *bhakti* influence on the part of the text but an attempt to portray the teacher of a particular group as more supremely efficacious for achieving spiritual attainment than all the others.

That the statement from the *Vīmaṃsakasutta* constitutes a declaration of the Buddha's authority over rival *samaṇa* is underlined further in an episode from the *Cūḷasīhanādasutta* (M i 63-8). Here the text describes a hypothetical situation, in which the heretics state that they too have confidence (*pasāda*) in their teacher, dhamma and saṅgha. The Commentary on this passage is at pains to ensure that the confidence in the heretics is differentiated from that in the followers of the Buddha: not only is *pasāda* defined as affection (*pema*) for a teacher such as Pūraṇa Kassapa but it is also affection connected with worldly life (Ps ii 8-9). In addition, the phrase from the *sutta* stating the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha can be understood as a summary form of the phrases recommended for practising the Recollections and as such supports a link between *pasāda* and the Recollections. In the compound "confidence by having undergone" (*aveccappasāda*),<sup>64</sup> there is more evidence in support of a connection with the Recollections. In the *Vatthūpamasutta* (M i 36-40), *aveccappasāda* is directly connected with the gradual purification of the mind. Having rid the mind of various defilements, a monk becomes possessed of *aveccappasāda*.<sup>65</sup> The formula for practising Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha is given in full and then the monk's development up to the point of arhatship is described.<sup>66</sup> Practice of the Recollections brings about the purification of the mind, a process which involves the calming of the mind and this suggests that those renderings of *pasāda* concerning calming or purifying are closer approximations to the way the word is used.<sup>67</sup>

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further elaboration: there are similarities but there is much more to *bhakti* than emotional response.

<sup>64</sup> This is Ñāṇamoli's suggested translation, which he explains as meaning confidence in the Three Jewels, having actually undergone cessation of craving that comes with the attainment of the First Path. Before this, there is only unconfirmed faith in what has been heard from another (1962: 47 n162/3).

<sup>65</sup> In the *Papañcasūdanī*, there is a differentiation of mundane and supramundane forms of *pasāda*: ... the supramundane confidence is brought to this monk by means of the path of the Non-Returner; mundane confidence arises for he who recollects the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. (Imassa bhikkhuno anāgāmimaggena lokuttarappasādo āgato; ath' assa aparena samayena Buddhaguṇe, Dhammaguṇe, Saṅghaguṇe ca anussarato lokiko uppajjati, Ps i 171)

<sup>66</sup> This process involves the experience of joy, delight, happiness, concentration, the *Brahmavihāra* and finally the knowledge of the cessation of the *kilesa* and the end of rebirth.

<sup>67</sup> In the *Nettipakaraṇa* (Netti 28), *pasāda* is glossed as "having the characteristic of being

Viewing *pasāda* in the broader context of Buddhist practice, enables a more coherent interpretation of narratives such as the following (DhpA iv 161-64). The first part of the story is rendered by Burlingame as follows:

For Akkosa Bhāradvāja had a brother named Bhāradvāja, and a wife named Dhanañjayanī who had attained the Fruit of Conversion. Whenever she sneezed or coughed or stumbled, she would breathe forth the Solemn Utterance, “Praise be to Him that is Highly Exalted, All-Worthy, Supremely Enlightened!” (HOS 30. 288)<sup>68</sup>

As it stands, the woman is presented as exhibiting rather odd behaviour. The key to understanding the narrative as a whole lies in the fact that at the very beginning, it is established that the woman is a Stream-Winner. In the *Samyuttanikāya* version of this episode (S i 160-1), she is described as confident in (*abhippasannā*) the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha.<sup>69</sup> Having established the nature of her spiritual status, this is then illustrated in the Dhammapada Commentary: even when she sneezed, coughed or stumbled she would utter the formula for Recollection of the Buddha. Thus the account is as follows. A Bhāradvāja brahman becomes irritated because his wife, Dhanañjayanī,<sup>70</sup> practises Recollection of the Buddha at every opportunity. When she pronounces a formula in a loud voice during almsgiving to the brahmins, the Bhāradvāja brahman finally loses his temper and he resolves to discredit the teaching of the Buddha, thereby proving that the Buddha is unworthy of the designation given by his wife. In attempting to defeat the Buddha by argument, he gains confidence in the Buddha, retires from the world and becomes an arhat. Norman provides a variant reading from the Cambodian MSS, which makes the reason more explicit. After listening to the Buddha’s discourse, the Bhāradvāja brahman says, “The monk Gotama is endowed with wisdom and is the best of men”, then he pronounces a verse, becomes

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undisturbed” (*anāvilakkhaṇa*). Ñāṇamoli (1962: 47 n162/1) renders *pasāda* as “transparency” or “settledness” (that is of water that was muddy and has become clear). The association with stillness is also found in the Dhammapada Commentary:

“Thus, monks, in times past also Kāṇā, whose heart was sad and whose mind was turbid, became through my words possessed of a mind limpid as a lake of still water [*pasannaudakarahado*].” (HOS 29. 192)

<sup>68</sup> Burlingame becomes somewhat confused by the number of Bhāradvāja characters in the narrative. The subject of the narrative is identified as Akkosabhāradvāja in opening sentence of the Dhammapada Commentary account but this character, the younger brother of the Bhāradvāja brāhmaṇ, does not appear until towards the end of the account. In the *Samyuttanikāya* account, of this episode, Akkosabhāradvāja forms the subject of the following *sutta* (S i 161-3) and is identified as related to the Bhāradvāja brahman, who features in the previous *sutta*, which is entitled “Dhanañjani”.

<sup>69</sup> In the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, this is underlined further (Spk i 226): the woman is a Stream-Winner, one of the Noble Hearers (*sotāpannā ariyasāvikā*).

<sup>70</sup> Her name is given as “Dhanañjani” in the Cambodian, Burmese and Sinhalese manuscripts of the Dhammapada Commentary.

confident in the Buddha and an arhat.<sup>71</sup> The Bhāradvāja brahman's younger brother, named Akkosabhāradvāja, angered by discovering that the Bhāradvāja brahman has become a renouncer, speaks discourteously to the Buddha, but is convinced by the Buddha's discourse, becomes confident, renounces and becomes an arhat. The same thing happens to two other brothers.

The Commentary on the *Samyuttanikāya* account makes it clear that the Bhāradvāja brahman<sup>72</sup> was a holder of wrong view:

For the brahman was a holder of wrong view. He covered his ears when the words "Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha" were spoken and he was hardened like an acacia-tree stump. (Spk i 226)<sup>73</sup>

and this highlights the main theme of the narrative: the transfer of patronage to the Buddha and his followers and the role that confidence (*pasāda*) plays in this. The Bhāradvāja brahman and his brothers become followers of the Buddha because they have been sufficiently impressed by the Buddha's discourse to them.

The link between *pasāda* and satisfaction with the conduct of renouncers is made explicit in another narrative from the Dhammapada Commentary (DhpA iii 113-9). In this episode, a group of nuns return from hearing the Buddha expound on Dhamma and, in order to persuade the nun Rūpanandā to do likewise, they relate the qualities of the Buddha. Introducing a pause into the narrative in the form of a narratorial aside, the "four assessments" (*catuppamāṇika*), which amount to four ways of evaluating a renouncer, are described: seeing the Buddha, hearing about the Buddha's qualities acquired through many rebirths or listening to Dhamma, by observing the austerity of his lifestyle and by reflecting on the appropriateness of his conduct (DhpA iii 113-4). By applying these forms of assessment to the Buddha, *pasāda* is aroused.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> The Cambodian manuscript omits the detail that he became a renouncer.

<sup>72</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary account, Akkosabhāradvāja is the subject of the narrative about Dhanañjanī, whereas the *Samyuttanikāya* account, he forms the subject of the following *sutta* and is identified as related to Bhāradvāja (S i 161-3).

<sup>73</sup> The *Sāratthappakāsinī* continues the narrative in a different way. Whilst Dhanañjanī has control of the narratorial voice (at one point she pronounces 500 verses), she is reprimanded by her husband for ruining the meal by pronouncing verse in praise of the Buddha. There is a rather comical description of the brahman guests fleeing from the meal after it has been spoiled by her praise of a rival *samaṇa*. There is no mention of the Bhāradvāja brahman becoming a follower of the Buddha: this appears to be understood. (The *sutta* is entitled "Dhanañjanī").

<sup>74</sup> There are episodes in the Dhammapada Commentary which illustrate this. A young man suffers an attack of jaundice (*paṇḍuroga*) but his father is so miserly that he refuses to employ the services of a physician. He concocts a remedy himself and at the last moment sends for a physician but it is too late and his only son dies. The young man is reborn in the Celestial Realm of the Thirty-Three, in possession of a golden mansion because on the point of dying, the Buddha appeared before him and he put his confidence in the Buddha. The development of the plot is anticipated as the Buddha reflects upon the disposition of Maṭṭhakuṇḍali (DhpA i 26).



Norman includes a variant reading from Fausbøll's manuscript for the description of the second form of assessment: *jātakā* instead of *jātisatāni*, an interpretation which is supported in the *Samantapāsādikā*. With regard to an episode from the *Cullavagga* (Vin ii 150-151), in which the Chabbaggiya monks have had male and female figures painted in their *vihāra*, only to have this designated as a *dukkata* offence by the Buddha, who thereafter permits only designs such as creepers or flowers to be painted, a further exception is added in the *Samantapāsādikā*: the painting of Jātaka-illustrations (*jātakappakaraṇa*) and such events as special almsgivings are also sanctioned, since they generate *pasāda* and other responses conducive to spiritual attainment (Sp vi 1219).<sup>75</sup> Not only does this suggest that support from the lay community was a serious consideration<sup>76</sup> but it also indicates the integral role that *pasāda* and other such responses play in spiritual development.

### Response and Spiritual Attainment

A response also found in connection with spiritual development is shock (*saṃvega*).<sup>77</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary, it occurs as the result of the Buddha's exposition of Dhamma:<sup>78</sup>

At the end of the discourse, those monks experienced a shock and became firmly established as arhats. (DhpA iii 489)<sup>79</sup>

At the end of the discourse, the Nigaṇṭhas, agitated in mind, became renouncers and the instruction also benefitted others present. (DhpA iii 491)<sup>80</sup>

It is not easy to convey the exact meaning of *saṃvega* and there have been various attempts: shock (Masefield 1994); urgency (Ñāṇamoli 1991); emotion (Geiger 1912). All seem to convey the idea that the experience of *saṃvega* involves some sort of

<sup>75</sup> This is reminiscent of the caveat added by Buddhaghosa which renders unedifying talk as a subject of meditation (see Chapter Three above). Rahula discusses such supplements and modifications to the *Vinayapiṭaka* in terms of the attempt by the Saṅgha to adapt to the new situation which developed after the Buddha's death (1956: 161). For a discussion of aspects of picture-storytelling in China and India, see Coomaraswamy (1929); Lamotte (1958: 84f); Mair (1983 & 1988); Raghavan (1959).

<sup>76</sup> A fuller discussion of this issue will be developed in Chapter Five.

<sup>77</sup> Balslev describes the role of *saṃvega* in the *Yogasūtra*. *Samvega* is characterized by detachment and acquired through performance of actions directed to the goal of Yoga:

... in the context of Yoga discourse *saṃvega* implies precisely that sort of zeal or enthusiasm which is born of traces of actions, done in a spirit of detachment, and which in turn will precipitate the attainment of salvation. (1991: 85)

There are similarities with the way in which *saṃvega* is presented in Pāli narrative literature but what Balslev then says is interesting. He points out that success in yoga practice is accelerated in accordance with the degree of *saṃvega* present in the aspirant (1991: 85).

<sup>78</sup> DhpA ii 11, 61, 258; iii 482; cf. ii 184

<sup>79</sup> *Deasanāvasāne te bhikkhū uppannasamvegā arahatte patiṭṭhiṃsū ti.*

<sup>80</sup> *Nigaṇṭhā desanāvasāne samvigamānasā pabbajimsu, sampattānam pi sātthikā desanā ahoṣi ti.*

sudden or disturbing physical or mental impression that leads on to action of some kind, such as renunciation or almsgiving. As a motif in narrative literature, *saṃvega* is used to describe the emotion experienced by a man on discovering his first grey hair and, as such, signals renunciation, especially of a king. In a *Jātaka* narrative (J i 137-9), Makhādeva, having instructed his barber to inform him of the appearance of the first grey hair, is one day presented with it:

At that time, the king still had eighty-four thousand years to live. Thus, on seeing the real grey hair, he was deeply shocked, imagining as though Death had approached and was standing nearby or as though his soul had entered a blazing hut of leaves. (J i 138)<sup>81</sup>

He struggles with the idea and sweat pours from his body.<sup>82</sup> Makhādeva realizes that he has not yet rid himself of the passions and so he gives up worldly life. In effect, the appearance of the first grey hair is like an admonition to attend to one's spiritual well-being.

The connection between the experience of *saṃvega* and progress on the path to spiritual attainment is illustrated in narratives involving admonitions, delivered from various sources:

Thereupon the forest-spirit who inhabited that forest-grove formed the resolution, "I will stir up this monk," and uttered in reply the following stanza (HOS 30. 182-3)<sup>83</sup>

The *Sammohavinidanī* contains an account which describes the effect upon a group of monks as a result of an admonition (VbhA 295-6). The group of monks is returning from paying homage at the Mahācetiya at Kalyāṇī when they meet a man who is covered from head to foot with ashes from working in a charcoal burner's field. The novices in the party make fun of him, even in front of the senior elders but then they hear his tale of woe. This man was once a *samaṇa* like them with great magic powers

<sup>81</sup> *Tadā rañño caturāsītivassahassāni āyum avasiṭṭhaṃ hoti. Evaṃ sante pi phaliṭaṃ disvā va maccurājānaṃ āgantvā samīpe thitaṃ viya attānaṃ ādittapaṇṇasālaṃ pavīṭhaṃ viya ca maññamāno saṃvegaṃ āpajjitvā.*

<sup>82</sup> cf. "As the treasurer struggled with the cakes, the sweat poured from his body and his craving disappeared" (DhpA i 371). Sweat seems to represent one or all of the passions, and its occurrence is one of the five well-known signs (*pañca pubbanimittāni*), signifying the end of a deity's lifespan in a celestial realm. It seems that life in the celestial realms is not pleasurable all the time. After hearing the Buddha's Dhamma, the deities experience *saṃvega*, an emotion which precipitates action because they realise that they are not immune from rebirth:

Then, monks, whatsoever devas there be, longlived, lovely and become happy, for a long time established in lofty palaces — they, too, on hearing the Dhamma-teaching of the Tathagata, for the most part are afraid: they fall to quaking and trembling, saying: "It seems, sirs, that we who thought ourselves permanent are after all impermanent ..." (GS II 37)

and it is one of the identifying features of a discontented monk in the *Kusajātaka* (J v 278).

<sup>83</sup> The Buddha takes on this role at DhpA iii 418.

(*iddhi*) but through lack of vigilance (*pamāda*), the powers vanished and he was reduced to his present state. He exhorts the monks to take him as a lesson (*ārammaṇa*). Taking heed of his admonition, the monks all experience *saṃvega*, which effects their transition to arhatship.<sup>84</sup> The effectiveness of paying heed to an admonition is neatly demonstrated by means of this narrative: the ash-covered man's narration illustrates the consequences of his lack of vigilance and this prompts the novices to look to their own lack of mental control. The experience of *saṃvega* as a way of regaining mental control is clearly set out elsewhere in *Sammohavinodanī*. Review of the eight grounds for *saṃvega* (*aṭṭha saṃvegavatthūni*) is recommended, in order to stir up a disheartened mind during the development of mindfulness (VbhA 284).<sup>85</sup>

There are several illustrations of the connection between specific responses and spiritual attainment in the Dhammapada Commentary and two such narratives will suffice to demonstrate some of the features outlined above. Clad only in bark and twigs after surviving a shipwreck, Bāhiya Dārucīriya is mistaken for an arhat and, after receiving abundant alms from a local community, he comes to believe that his perceived spiritual status is true, until a deity intervenes. In the *Udāna* account (Ud 6-9), the deity is described as speaking to him "out of compassion and desire for his welfare"<sup>86</sup> and he is stirred up (*saṃvejita*).<sup>87</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary account (DhpA ii 209-17), the identity of the deity is given as one who had practised meditation with Bāhiya

<sup>84</sup> cf. the narrative of the novice who failed to take heed of his preceptor's admonition (VbhA 293f). This narrative is framed by the phrases, "Herein, this is the story [told] for the purpose of making it plain that arisen tranquility and insight, by their ceasing, lead to harm" (DD II 4) and "Thus it is that tranquility and insight, by ceasing, lead to harm" (DD II 5). The reader is directed to understand the narrative in a specific way.

<sup>85</sup> The eight grounds for *saṃvega* include birth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhī*) and death (*maraṇa*) and they lead to the arising of the concentration enlightenment factor (*samādhisambojjhanga*). In the Dhammapada Commentary, the paradigmatic example of *saṃvega* occurs in the life of the future Buddha. While still a prince of the Sākiyas, the future Buddha has a succession of *saṃvega* experiences, which culminate in the Great Renunciation as a result of contemplating three of the eight grounds for *saṃvega*:

In the course of time it came to pass that, as he proceeded on three successive days to the garden to amuse himself, he beheld the Three Heavenly Messengers; namely, a man worn out by old age, a man afflicted with disease, and a dead man. On each of the three days he returned to his palace, overcome with emotion. (HOS 28. 195)

<sup>86</sup> This motif occurs also in the *Saṃyuttanikāya*. In one account, while taking a siesta, a monk's mind wanders onto worldly matters. A deity, moved by compassion and wishing to stir up the monk, addresses him. As a result the monk is stirred up by the deity and experiences *saṃvega* (S i 197).

<sup>87</sup> The *Udāna* Commentary on this episode (UdA 77-99) contains the following gloss:

Shocked (*saṃvejito*): having been given a shock thinking, "Accursed, truly, is this puthujjana status, as a result of which I, though being no arahant, conceived myself to be an arahant and did not know that a Perfectly Self-Enlightened One had arisen in the world and was teaching Dhamma; but hard to know, indeed, is this life, (as is) dying hard to know", meaning with his heart shocked, through the utterance of that devata, in the aforementioned mode. (UdCom I 85)



in a previous life:<sup>88</sup>

To this denizen of the Brahma world, then, occurred the following thought, “This man was associated with me in setting up the ladder and in the ascent of the mountain and in the practice of meditation; but now he has developed wrong view and by his present course of conduct he is in danger of perdition: I will stir him up.” (HOS 29. 223)

Thus, in the Commentary, the reason is made explicit: Bāhiya has adopted wrong view and he needs to be given a shock to make him change his ways. The deity tells Bāhiya that he is not an arhat and will find a real one in Sāvattthī. As he listens, Bāhiya becomes stirred up (*saṃviggamānasa*) and he sets off for the city. On meeting the Buddha, he feels such intense joy (*balavapīti*) that his whole body is suffused by it (DhpA ii 214). Bāhiya persuades the Buddha to teach Dhamma and, even while he is listening to the Buddha’s discourse, he becomes an arhat.<sup>89</sup> The admonition delivered by the deity causes Bāhiya to experience *saṃvega* and spurs him to action. The joy he then experiences on encountering the Buddha purifies his mind, as preparation for further spiritual attainment.<sup>90</sup>

In another Dhammapada Commentary narrative (DhpA ii 112-27), Kappina, a monk and an arhat, is described as walking around the Jetavana monastery exclaiming “Oh happiness! Oh happiness!”.<sup>91</sup> As an arhat, Mahākappina is by definition one who is free from passion, anger and ignorance and one whose actions do not generate results which lead to rebirth. Consequently there is some justification for the view that his expression of emotion casts doubt on his spiritual credentials. This view is articulated in the narrative by the ubiquitous group of monks who observe his demeanour and think that he still has some attachment to his former life as a king (DhpA ii 126). It has already been established in the narrative that Kappina is an arhat, so all that remains is to determine to what he is referring in his expression of happiness. This is relayed

<sup>88</sup> This is given in the form of an extended narratorial aside, which relates the previous relationship of Bāhiya and a fellow monk (DhpA ii 210-2).

<sup>89</sup> cf. the narrative of Vakkali (DhpA iv 117-9) discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>90</sup> What is interesting about this episode in the Dhammapada Commentary is that the description of the intense joy Bāhiya experiences is given in the form of a narratorial aside, giving the reason why the Buddha refuses Bāhiya’s request to hear Dhamma:

This, we are told, was the thought that occurred to him, “From the time this man first saw me, his whole body has been suffused with joy; from the great shock he has received, though he should listen to the Law, he would not be able to comprehend it; let him remain in a state of placid equanimity.” (HOS 29. 225)

indicating that the text wishes to draw attention to this in line with its aim of evoking joy (*pīti*). Comparison with other versions shows that this aim is peculiar to the Dhammapada Commentary. In other versions found in the *Udāna* and *Manorathapūraṇi*, Bāhiya does not experience joy (*pīti*) on seeing the Buddha (Ud 6-9; Mp i 279-83).

<sup>91</sup> The narrative of Bhaddiya in the *Cullavagga* displays similar motifs (Vin ii 183-4).



through the Buddha's reply: there is no condemnation of the outpouring of emotion in referring to *nibbāna*, only further confirmation of the spiritual status of Kappina and of the monks' misconstruction of the event. This should come as no surprise to the reader because it is stated at the beginning that the narrative is an *anupubbikathā* (DhpA ii 112) and the events of Kappina's previous life are related, prior to a lengthy account of Kappina's progress on the path to spiritual attainment, in which Kappina experiences fivefold joy,<sup>92</sup> practises the Recollections<sup>93</sup> and with purified mind and becomes an arhat after listening to the Buddha's discourse.

In this narrative, the view preserved in the Commentary seems to be that it is possible for those with highest form of spiritual attainment to continue to experience the specific emotion of happiness (*sukha*)<sup>94</sup> in connection with a particular situation. It is also the case that *saṃvega* is experienced by arhats in response to certain situations.<sup>95</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary, there are descriptions of arhats who experience dhammasaṃvega:

Those who had not yet become Stream-Winners were unable to hold back their tears; appropriate emotion was felt by those with extinguished Outflows. (DhpA iv 93; cf. i 365; ii 179; iii 158, 267)<sup>96</sup>

The view that those with the highest forms of spiritual attainment continue to experience such responses is also found in the Dhammapada.<sup>97</sup> However, another view put

<sup>92</sup> On hearing that the Three Jewels have appeared in the world, King Kappina's body is suffused with the five kinds of joy (*pañcavaṇṇa pīti*) and he and his retinue set out to become monks under the Buddha (DhpA ii 117-8).

<sup>93</sup> On the way to meet the Buddha, Kappina and his retinue reach the Aravacchā river. On learning that there are no boats to make the crossing, Kappina utters an Act of Truth (DhpA ii 120) and having considered the qualities of the Three Jewels, he practises Recollection of the Buddha:

Having thus called to mind the qualities of the Three Jewels, the king practised Recollection of the Buddha, saying, "He is an Exalted One, an Arhat, a Supremely Enlightened One, Endowed with Knowledge and Good Conduct." (DhpA ii 120)

It is explicitly stated in the text that Kappina practises Recollection of the Buddha, using the recommended formula. He and his retinue on a thousand horses cross the river without so much as wetting the tips of the horses' hooves. Continuing the journey, they come upon two more obstacles, the Nīlavāhanā and Candabhāgā rivers, which they cross as before while Kappina practises Recollection of the Dhamma and Saṅgha respectively. The entire pattern is repeated, although in a considerably condensed form, for Kappina's wife, Queen Anojā. She receives the news of Kappina's renunciation of his kingdom and decides to become a nun herself. While making the same journey, she crosses the three rivers in the same way as Kappina by using Recollection of the Three Jewels in turn (DhpA ii 122-4).

<sup>94</sup> *Sukha* is experienced after *pāmojja* and *pīti* and before the mind is concentrated (A iii 21).

<sup>95</sup> This is made explicit in the *Nikāya*. In the *Anguttaranikāya*, practice of mindfulness centred on the body is said to produce *saṃvega* (A i 43; cf S v 130).

<sup>96</sup> *Tattha puthujjanā assūni sandhāretum nāsakkhiṃsu, khīṇāsavānaṃ dhammasaṃvego uppajji.*

<sup>97</sup> In verses 374 and 381, it is stated that joy and delight can be experienced by one who has Buddhist realization:

So soon as one grasps the thought of the rise and set of the Aggregates of Being,

forward in the Commentary is at variance with that outlined above. In order to proceed on the path of spiritual attainment, it is stated that joy must be “put aside”.<sup>98</sup> Returning to the example of the discontented monk, Sappadāsa, his experience of all-pervading joy (*pharaṇā pīti*) is the result of practising Recollection on Virtue. Having laid this joy aside and developed insight, he becomes an arhat with the Discriminations (DhpA ii 257; cf. iv 119; 172). Undoubtedly, this is an example of a discrepancy of views, which has been preserved in the Commentary. Nevertheless, common to both views is that such specific responses are regarded as conducive to progress on the path of spiritual attainment.

The interconnection of response and spiritual attainment is further illustrated by a gloss from the Dhammapada Commentary:

But this delight in the Law, such as springs up within whoever either recites or listens to the Law, producing a state of joy and exaltation [*pītiudaggabhava*], causing tears to flow, causing hair to stand on end, such a delight as this puts an end to the round of existences, and leads ultimately to Arahathship; such a delight as this is the best of delights. Therefore it is said: *Delight in the Law surpasses all delights*. (HOS 30. 238)<sup>99</sup>

The experience of joy is characterized by several features: it arises in those those who listen to or recite the teaching and leads eventually to arhatship.<sup>100</sup> Here the emphasis is upon the cultivation of specific responses in relation to the teaching, which contribute towards spiritual development. Returning to the Prologue, in which the same response is evoked in connection with both verses and commentary, the view that commentarial material is crucially involved in this process is evident.

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One obtains the happiness and joy [*pītipāmojja*] of those who comprehend the Deathless. (HOS 30. 258)

Full of joy and satisfaction [*pāmojja*], the monk who has perfect faith in the Religion of the Buddha,  
Will reach the Place of Peace, Cessation of Existence, Happiness. (HOS 30. 263)

<sup>98</sup> Burlingame renders *vikkhambetvā* as “suppressed” but “putting aside” joy does not preclude experiencing it at another time.

<sup>99</sup> Delight in Dhamma (*dhmmarati*) is interpreted in the gloss to refer to joy (*pīti*).

<sup>100</sup> Similarly, in the *Sammohavinodanī*, the generation of *saṃvega* is given as a reason for teaching the first Truth, in an alternative explanation of why the Truth of Suffering comes first in the order of teaching:

Or alternatively he announced the Truth of Suffering first for the purpose of inspiring a sense of urgency [*saṃvegajananattha*] in beings who are entangled in the enjoyment of the pleasures of becoming. (DD I 105)

## CONCLUSION

It has been shown how the inclusion of the responses “joy and delight” to the Dhammapada Commentary signals to the reader how the text is to be seen in relation to others. The reader will frame the text intertextually from any one of a number of locations in which joy and delight arise: joy and delight are found to be amongst the benefits of practising the Recollections and contribute to the purification of the mind prior to and during spiritual development. A more explicit direction to a source occurs in the Prologue: joy and delight are evoked in connection with the “meaning and application” of the teaching, an association which is found in an *Āṅguttaranikāya* discourse on the “five circumstances of release”. In this discourse, the connection between these responses and spiritual attainment in the context of the teaching and ritual practice is emphasized. Rather than an aesthetic technique *per se*, this is viewed as an indication of the relationship between text and interpretive community and identified by Graham as the sensual dimension of scripture.

It becomes apparent that specific responses are integrally involved in spiritual development. Not only does this presuppose a different model of emotion, closer to one in which emotions are viewed as cognitive appraisals of situations, as advocated by Nussbaum but it also introduces the idea, formulated by Lutz as a consequence of viewing emotions as socially and culturally constructed, that emotions have an ideological aspect, as part of the strategy to legitimate. This could perhaps begin to answer the question raised by Hallisey regarding the mechanisms by which some texts survive whilst others disappear.

In the light of this, a related question concerning the rhetorical aspect of such responses is raised. Buddhaghosa concludes his exposition of the six Recollections with a clause (Vism i 228), stating that the chapter has been composed with the purpose of making good people experience delight (*pāmojja*). The rhetorical effect of such statements becomes more evident in considering instances of the use of initial sequential instruction (*anupubbikathā*) in the Dhammapada Commentary and elsewhere. However, the particularity of such responses were found to be differentiated from their more mundane counterparts through their occurrence in situations associated with spiritual development. Thus, an individual who has embarked on a course of action which endangers his or her spiritual welfare is brought back through an admonition, which generates shock (*saṃvega*) and precipitates remedial action. The regaining of mental control brings about further progress on the path to spiritual attainment. A similar effect is achieved though the experience of confidence (*pasāda*), a response which features in narratives of conversion. It was argued that *pasāda* is not to be understood here as faith

but instead as confidence in the Buddha and his teaching as supremely efficacious for spiritual attainment. This becomes apparent from the context in which such declarations of confidence occur, which, in the *Dhammapada Commentary*, is usually the competition for lay followers.



## CHAPTER FIVE

PREOCCUPATIONS AND VIEWS IN THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARYINTRODUCTION

Reid demonstrates that intertextual framing works substitutively, as a device for propelling narrative movement, by offering the “possibility of substitution” (1992: 51): the reader is invited to observe how the view of one text is to be confirmed or modified, without being replaced by another text. It is clear that the way in which the reader frames the Dhammapada Commentary intertextually influences the view of how the text is to be seen in relation to other texts in the collection and therefore plays a crucial role in appreciating the value of commentaries in the narrative form. In this connection, Reid’s assertion that, of the four types of framing, extratextual framing should be regarded as predominant, is valid, since extratextual framing influences how other types of framing will be set in motion (Reid 1988: 31). For example, a reader will frame the English translation of the *Vinayapiṭaka* circumtextually to view the *Suttavibhaṅga* as the fundamental constituent of monastic discipline, since this is placed as the first three volumes of the translation. This is not the case in Oldenberg’s Pāli edition, where the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*, that is the largely narrative portions of the text, are placed as the first and second volumes. Oldenberg constructs his text by placing the *Khandhaka* first, followed by the *Suttavibhaṅga* and *Parivāra*. Horner argues that since the *Pātimokkha* is the oldest portion of the *Vinaya*, the *Suttavibhaṅga* should be placed first, since that is where the *Pātimokkha* is located (1938: viii).<sup>1</sup> Such views reveal more about the way in which the *Vinayapiṭaka* is framed circumtextually and extratextually by these scholars: if monastic discipline is understood by an interpretive community as the regulation of behaviour by a set of rules, then this explains why primacy is accorded to those portions of the *Vinayapiṭaka* which reflect this. Dutt offers the following description of the *Vinayapiṭaka*:

It is a collection of legends, each containing a precept of the Lord that pertains either to the individual life and conduct of the Bhikkhu or to some institution of the collective Saṅgha life. (1924: 74)

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<sup>1</sup> Horner offers other arguments to support her view by comparison with *Vinaya* texts of other groups. She also notes how Buddhaghosa begins the *Samantapāsādikā* with an exposition of the *Suttavibhaṅga* (1938: vii-viii) but this is not strictly the case, since the *Samantapāsādikā* begins with an account of the Council at Rājagaha.

Interestingly, this description could be applied equally as well to the Dhammapada Commentary, since many of the narratives follow this pattern and are concerned with issues of monastic conduct but the Commentary is not generally regarded as dealing with matters of *vinaya*. The presence of such narratives in a “non-Vinaya” text perhaps suggests that *vinaya* has a greater role to play in the construction of Buddhism than perhaps has been previously recognised.<sup>2</sup> At the very least, the preoccupation of other texts, such as the Dhammapada Commentary, with issues of monastic deportment, indicates that concern over how and why rules were applied was not restricted to the *Vinayapiṭaka* itself.

A preoccupation with views is clearly displayed in the Dhammapada Commentary. There are some narratives in which views are often crystallized into a debate between two parties, designated as those with right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and those with wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*).<sup>3</sup> In one narrative (DhpA i 25-37), a brahman wishes to ask the Buddha a question after an encounter with a deity and invites the Buddha to take a meal in his house:

The Teacher, accompanied by the Congregation of Monks, went to his house and sat down on the seat prepared for him. The Brahman waited upon him respectfully. A multitude of people assembled. [For] when a man who holds [wrong view] invites the Tathāgata, two classes of people assemble. Those who hold [wrong view] assemble with the thought in their minds, “Today we shall see the monk Gotama embarrassed by the questions that are asked him.” Those who hold [right view] assemble with the thought, “Today we shall see the power of a Buddha and the [skill] of a Buddha.” (DhpA i 33)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Recent studies based on the *Vinayapiṭaka* advocate a view that the monastic code was not designed to be punitive. Holt builds upon Dutt’s theory that the *Pātimokkha* was originally a confession of faith which was later elaborated into a code of discipline (1983: 38) and he examines the monastic code in the context of ritual purity. He concludes that the rules of monastic conduct serve as a set of guidelines for controlling intention, since it is undisciplined intention which results in actions with attachments to their consequences, perpetuating entanglement in the world. Wijayaratna adopts a similar position, arguing that the rules were not injunctions but were designed to act as a source of advice particularly for new members of the community so that they were aware of the kinds of actions which must be avoided (Wijayaratna 1990: 145).

<sup>3</sup> Statement of wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*) are found in the Majjhima- and Aṅguttaranikāya (M iii 71-72; A iv 226):

There is no (result from) what is given, there is no (result from) offerings, there is no (result from) sacrifice; there is no fruit, no result, of deeds well done or badly done; there is not this world, there is not a world beyond; there is (no benefit from serving) mother, there is (no benefit from serving) father; there are no opapatika beings; there are in the world no recluses and brahmins who have reached the highest point, who have proceeded rightly and who proclaim this world and the world beyond, having realised them by their own superknowledge. (MLS III 114)

<sup>4</sup> This motif is introduced in the form of a narratorial aside, alerting the reader to the significance of the subsequent demonstration of supernatural powers.

Needless to say that the Buddha's answer wins the brahman's support and the brahman spends his considerable wealth attending the Buddha and his followers. However, the crowd still entertains doubts and the Buddha calls upon the deity (the brahman's son in a previous rebirth) to convince the crowd of the Buddha's claims.

The attribution of wrong view appears more frequently in the Commentary, even by those within the monastic community. In one narrative (DhpA iv 150-1), a group of monks mistakenly construe Sāriputta's salutation in the direction of his teacher as reverence for the cardinal points<sup>5</sup> and accuse him of holding wrong view. The Buddha verifies that Sāriputta's behaviour is motivated by respect for his teacher and thereby renders the accusation of wrong views harmless. This episode highlights the emphasis in the text upon the necessity of exhibiting exemplary behaviour and can be viewed as part of the process of definition over against other interpretations of such issues which is taking place in the Commentary. The preoccupation with such differences of interpretation, which existed within the monastic community, is indicated by, for example, a narrative in the Dhammapada Commentary, which describes the differences between monasteries in the allowance of cloaks allocated to individual monks. (DhpA iii 139f). Similarly, there are many stories which focus upon *vinaya* infringements, such as the monk who finds making a journey for alms every day tiresome so he stores food (DhpA ii 171f) or the notorious Chabbaggiya monks, who come to blows with another group of monks (DhpA iii 48; 50) or the monk who possesses many requisites (DhpA iii 72f).<sup>6</sup> The preoccupation with issues of monastic discipline appears to be justified, given that the authenticity of renouncers is evaluated by individuals on basis of outward conduct, as the following illustrates:

Now a certain monk with extinguished Outflows, making his round for alms during the day, stopped at the door of the property owner's house. When the property owner saw him, he was pleased with his deportment. He invited him into his house and respectfully served him with the choicest food. (DhpA ii 52)

Pleasing deportment accrues material support from the lay community and, in an environment in which renouncer groups compete for lay support, this becomes an issue of crucial importance.

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<sup>5</sup> The invocation for protection of the spirits and gods inhabiting the six quarters was a part of Brāhmanical ritual, as described in the *Sigālovādasutta* (D iii 180-93).

<sup>6</sup> It is impossible to determine whether these actually represent the interpretations of specific individuals or groups but what is clear is the particular way in which views are introduced to be discredited later in the narrative.

## SUBSTITUTION AND DISPOSSESSION

The degree to which the reader is persuaded by the view of the text rests upon the extent to which the application of framing strategies results in the apprehension of stable textual meaning. As long as control of the narratorial voice is retained, the reader is able to attribute meaning to the text, depending upon the framing strategies employed, which vary from reader to reader. Reid identifies factors which potentially disrupt the terms of textual exchange as substitution and dispossession. Four examples are provided to illustrate the above features: in the first example, attention will be drawn to the presence of views in the narrative; in the second, discussion will focus on the substitutive and dispossessive motifs; the third example highlights views, substitution and dispossession in the context of intertextual framing and in the fourth example, destabilization of textual meaning occurs through substitution and dispossession.

### Four Examples of Substitution and Dispossession in the Dhammapada Commentary

#### a) Santati (DhpA iii 78-84)

In this narrative, it is described how Santati, a minister of King Pasenadi's court, has just returned to the city of Sāvathī, after successfully suppressing a rebellion and he is ready to enjoy the rewards bestowed upon him by the king. At the beginning of the narrative, the Buddha predicts that Santati will approach him, become an arhat after hearing a four-part verse and then rise into the air and pass into *nibbāna*. Such anticipation of events, whilst limiting the way in which the story unfolds, still permits the entertainment of other possible plot developments. In the Santati narrative, these are considered in the form of differing views entertained by the city's inhabitants. Some of the citizens see this as an opportunity to catch the Buddha out whilst others, confident in the supernatural power of the Buddha, relish the prospect of seeing the skill of both the Buddha and Santati.<sup>7</sup> Of these, the former are described as those with wrong view and the latter are those with right view.

Those of the crowd who held [wrong view] thought to themselves, "Look at the way the monk Gotama acts! Whatever comes into his head he speaks with his mouth! This very day, so he says, that drunken sot [Santati], adorned as he is

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<sup>7</sup> The term *līlha*, (lit. 'polish'; skill, mastery) is sometimes found in connection with the way in which the Buddha teaches Dhamma. In his Dictionary of the Pāli Language, Childers hints at this: ... the idea is that of playing with the adversary's arguments, answering them with perfect ease (1875: 220)



with all the adornments, will come into his presence and listen to the Law and pass into Nibbāna! But this is precisely what will not happen; this very day we shall catch him in a lie.” On the other hand [those with right view] thought to themselves, “Oh how great and how marvelous is the supernatural power of the Buddhas! To-day we shall have the privilege of beholding the [skill] of the Buddha and the [skill] of the minister Santati.” (DhpA iii 79)<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, Santati, having spent a week drinking to celebrate his military triumph, settles down to watch the performance of a female artiste, who is part of his reward for suppressing the rebellion. The dancer has fasted for seven days to improve the skill of her performance and drops dead as she begins her routine. Santati, overcome by sorrow, seeks refuge from it in the Buddha (DhpA iii 80).<sup>9</sup> Following the pronouncement of a verse by the Buddha, Santati becomes an arhat and the Buddha’s prediction is fulfilled. Control of the narratorial voice is now firmly held by one side of the story and there follows a process of reinforcement. The Buddha asks Santati to relate his deed of a previous birth but not standing on the ground (where he would still be vulnerable to subversion from a rival narrator) but at the height of seven palm trees above the ground. Poised cross-legged in the air, Santati proclaims his deed of merit putting himself quite literally beyond the reach of rival narratorial voices.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of narratorial control means that the view represented by Santati can now be set forth. Santati describes how, in a previous life, he proclaimed Dhamma and urged others to perform works of merit and how this bore fruit even in the same lifetime: he went about richly adorned and generously equipped with the gifts of those to whom he had proclaimed Dhamma. In that existence, Santati, by imitating others who proclaimed Dhamma, obtained right view.<sup>11</sup> The events which culminate in the rehearsal of Santati’s former deed of merit show the error of those with wrong

<sup>8</sup> The use of anticipation is interesting here, since two possible plot developments are entertained rather than one, requiring a further reiteration by the Buddha that those holding right view will increase after Santati relates his meritorious deed from a previous life (DhpA iii 80).

<sup>9</sup> The formula of this narrative is repeated up to this point in the narrative of Prince Abhaya (DhpA iii 166-7). Reference is made to the Santati narrative but the Abhaya narrative is not developed in the same way.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the narrative of Jambuka, in which Jambuka performs the same feat (DhpA ii 62) and the attempt by Ajātasattu to pull a ring from Jotika’s hand by leaping into the air to a great height (DhpA iv 223). There is a variation on this motif: Moggallāna appears poised in mid-air at the seventh floor window of a miser’s palace as part of a strategy to obtain control of the narratorial voice (DhpA i 370). Moggallāna also levitates in order to escape thieves who have been sent to murder him by the heretics (DhpA iii 65-7). Mahākālā also leaps into the air by his supernatural power to avoid the attempts to disrobe him by his former wives (DhpA i 77).

<sup>11</sup> This is “mundane right view” and is described as affected by the Outflows and on the side of merit ripening to rebirth (M iii 72). In this lifetime, as a result of hearing the Buddha teach, Santati obtained “supermundane right view”, which is described as without the Outflows, outside the world of rebirth and a factor of the eightfold path.

view.<sup>12</sup> They had hoped that the Buddha's prediction would not be fulfilled and that he would be revealed as a fraud. Once Santati begins his narration, there is no further opportunity for their point of view to be heard. The efficacy of merit-making for those with right view is further emphasized when the Buddha collects Santati's relics, causes a relic mound to be built over them and says,

“By worshipping (these relics), the multitude will earn merit.” (DhpA iii 83)

#### b) The Four Novices (DhpA iv 176-80)

In the second story, a woman asks her husband to go to the monastery and have four brahmins selected to receive the food she has prepared, thinking that he will bring back some sufficiently ancient and venerable recipients. He returns, having been allocated four seven-year-old novices who also happen to be arhats. Losing her temper, she orders him to go back and fetch an *old* brahmin. With each monk brought by the husband as a replacement for the novices, the possibility of earning greater merit from the gift of food increases but these substitutes are rejected by the woman because they do not meet her idea of a worthy recipient. Her rejection of them endangers her control of the narratorial voice. The woman is finally dispossessed of any possibility of narratorial control by the third substitution, Sakka, ruler of the celestial world. Alerted by the heat generated by the novices' good qualities, Sakka dons the disguise of an old and decrepit brahmin and is received by the woman with great ceremony. However, to the woman's horror, Sakka deliberately chooses to sit crosslegged on the ground, acknowledging the superior spiritual attainment of the novices. Bearing in mind the manner in which Santati, the king's minister, related his deed of merit poised crosslegged in the air, it is not surprising to discover what happens next. Sakka refuses to budge and even though the woman and her husband succeed in dragging him out of the house, he remains seated in the same place.

So the Brāhman and his wife both took hold of his two arms, belabored him about the back, and dragged him through the door out of the house. Nevertheless Sakka remained sitting in the same place in which he had sat before, waving his hands back and forth.

When the Brāhman and his wife returned and saw him sitting in the very same place in which he had sat before, they screamed screams of terror and let him go. (HOS 30. 298)

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<sup>12</sup> This includes the belief that there are no recluses who can claim genuine spiritual attainment, a view dramatically refuted by Santati (M iii 71-72; cf. A iv 226).

Their terror marks their final loss of self-control, confirms the end of any narratorial control and they disappear from the narrative arena.

Sakka succeeds in wresting control of the narratorial voice from the brahman couple without uttering a single word so further reinforcement of this side of the story is necessary. Back at the monastery, the novices speak for the first time as they relate what happened to the group of monks. However, their version is still not sufficient reinforcement since the monks at the monastery harbour doubts and it is necessary for the Buddha to give his final sanction to their side of the story:

When the novices returned to the monastery, the monks asked them, ... "But were you not angry with them for what they did?" "No, we were not angry." When the monks heard their reply, they reported the matter to the Teacher, saying, "Reverend Sir, when these monks say, 'We were not angry,' they say what is not true, they utter falsehood." Said the Teacher, "Monks, they that have rid themselves of the evil passions oppose not them by whom they are opposed." (HOS 30. 299)

In the examples above, it has been shown how a rival narrator poaches control of the narratorial voice by exercising supernatural power. Santati proclaimed his side of the story loudly and clearly from a great height where no rival narrator could reach him. Sakka, the ruler of the celestial world, remained immovable until potential rival narrators, the brahman and his wife, gave up their attempts to dislodge him. In the next narrative, the potential rival narrator is reduced to a state in which it is impossible for him to tell his side of the story.

#### c) Cunda (DhpA i 125-9)

The narrative describes how, for fifty-five years, Cunda has earned a living as a pork-butcher. Not only has he deliberately and cruelly taken the lives of countless animals but he has also performed no works of merit. One day he falls ill and he is visited with a vision of what awaits him as the fruit of his unrepentant ways. The shock is so great that Cunda begins to behave like a pig. He grunts and squeals and crawls around on his hands and knees. Reduced to this state, he can only tell his side of the story using a language no-one understands. However, he is even prevented from doing this when some men overpower him, gag him and barricade the door of his house.

Not a person was able to sleep in the seven houses round about. The members of his own household, terrified by the fear of death, unable otherwise to prevent him from going out, barricaded the doors of the house that he might not be able to go out, but might be confined within. Having so done, they surrounded the house and stood on guard. Back and forth for seven days crawled Cunda within his house, suffering the torment of Hell, grunting and squealing like a pig. (HOS 28. 227)



After seven days as a human pig, Cunda dies and is reborn in the Avīci Hell. Although Cunda has now disappeared from the narrative arena of this world, he has now entered that of the Avīci Hell. Thus, rather than describe the torment he suffers there and risk handing the narratorial voice to his side of the story, the text refers the reader to the *Devadūtasutta* (M iii 178-87). This discourse describes the proceedings of the Avīci Hell, the destination of those unfortunates who, lacking right view, are reborn there having failed to pay heed to a series of celestial messengers. Amongst the tortures described are ones similar to those inflicted by Cunda on the pigs.<sup>13</sup>

The silencing of Cunda indicates that the text has successfully forestalled a rival narrator. The narrative is pervaded by one “homogeneous attitudinal voice” (Reid 1992: 125) and the result is relatively stable textual meaning. In this way, the reader is able to grasp that an evildoer cannot escape the consequences of an evil deed. This is the “view” of the text but only for as long as the “homogeneous attitudinal voice” is successful in fending off any attempts by rival narrators to wrest control of the narratorial voice and thus relate the events from a different perspective.

#### d) The Young Monk (DhpA iii 161-3)

In the final narrative, the necessity for one side of the story to be at the centre of the reader’s attention can sometimes be at the expense of unequivocal and stable textual meaning. In this narrative, Visākhā’s granddaughter is straining water for monks to drink when she sees the reflection of her face in the water and laughs. A young monk sees it and also laughs, whereupon the granddaughter says that a “cut-head” is

<sup>13</sup> This reference functions both intertextually and intratextually. The tortures of the Niraya Hell are described in the *Majjhimanikāya* account as follows:

Then, monks, the guardians of Niraya Hell speak thus to him: “My good man, what do you want?” He speaks thus: “I am thirsty, revered sirs.” Monks, the guardians of Niraya Hell, opening his mouth with a glowing iron spike, burning, aflame, ablaze, sprinkle glowing copper and bronze into his mouth, burning, aflame, ablaze. It burns his lips and it burns his mouth and it burns his throat and it burns his chest and it passes out below taking with it his bowels and intestines. Thereat he feels feelings that are painful, sharp, severe. But he does not do his time until he makes an end of that evil deed. (MLS III 229)

The following is how the tortures inflicted by Cunda on the pigs are described in the Dhammapada Commentary:

Whenever he wanted to kill a pig, he would fasten the pig securely to a post and pound him with a square club to make his flesh swell plump and tender. Then, forcing open the pig’s jaws and inserting a little wedge in his mouth, he would pour down his throat boiling water from a copper boiler. The hot water would penetrate the pig’s belly, loosening the excrement, and would pass out through the anus, carrying a little hot excrement with it. So long as there was even a little excrement left in the pig’s belly, the water would come out stained and turbid; but as soon as the pig’s belly was clean, the water would come out pure and clear. (HOS 28. 226)

The reader’s attention is alerted to another discourse, which either confirms or modifies the view presented in the Commentary, thereby altering the way in which the reader understands the narrative.



laughing. Taking offence, the young monk addresses her in the same way and she runs weeping to Visākhā. The scene is now set for the two rival narrators, the granddaughter and the young monk, to bid for control of the narratorial voice. At first, it is the granddaughter who gets her side of the story heard: she tells her grandmother and Visākhā tells the young monk's preceptor. Both believe her version of the incident and both try to conciliate the young monk, declaring that "cut-head" is not an insult but a term of respect and admiration of the shaved head required by monastic rule. Visākhā says to the young monk:

"Reverend Sir, be not offended. You misunderstand that remark. It is an expression of profound respect for a noble monk with hair and nails cut close, who, as he goes his round for alms, holds in the folds of under and upper garments a potsherd cut and broken." The young monk replied, "Quite true, lay disciple; you understand that it is in accordance with my rule that the hair of my head and so forth are cut short. But was it proper for this girl to insult me by saying to me, 'You are a cut-head'?" (HOS 30. 1)

Both Visākhā and the preceptor are recognized figures of authority elsewhere in the textual world<sup>14</sup> and so it seems that with the support of such respectable persons, the granddaughter will win. However, the young monk maintains throughout all this that it is improper for the granddaughter to address him in this way. At this point, the Buddha enters the narrative arena and takes the side of the monk. The reason is made explicit in the text: using his supernatural powers, the Buddha perceives that the young monk possesses the potential to be established on the path to enlightenment. In order for this to happen, the Buddha must enable him to regain his self-control and so he favours the monk's side of the story:

"But Visākhā, is it proper for your granddaughter, merely because my disciples go about with hair and so forth cut short, on that account to insult them by calling them cut-heads?" The young monk immediately sprang to his feet, and extending his clasped hands in an attitude of reverent supplication, said, "Reverend Sir, you alone correctly understand this matter; neither our preceptor nor our eminent female lay disciple understands it correctly." (HOS 30. 2)

The young monk is a rival narrator who cannot be silenced and having gained control of the narratorial voice, his side of the story is now at the centre of the reader's attention. As soon as the granddaughter loses control of the narratorial voice, she

<sup>14</sup> Visākhā is described as "the foremost female lay disciples". She features several times in the Dhammapada Commentary, most notably in the story of her marriage (DhpA i 384-419).

<sup>15</sup> For example, the ascetic (*tāpasa*) Nārada is described in a Story of the Past as possessing great supernatural power (*mahānubhāva*) and uses the power of his magic (*iddhibala*) to prevent the sun from rising (DhpA i 41).

disappears from the narrative arena, taking the dispute with her. However, there are still some doubts concerning the cause of the quarrel which may linger in the reader's mind. The Buddha takes the side of the young monk and yet the monk's behaviour is by no means exemplary: he returned the insult in a more extreme form, not only calling the girl but also her parents cut-heads. The Buddha supports the young monk's position not because it is necessarily justifiable but in order to facilitate his establishment on the path to spiritual attainment. Having perceived the young monk's disposition as ready for spiritual attainment, the Buddha takes his side, apparently ignoring the young monk's questionable conduct in relation to lay supporters.

The substitution of the characters, the granddaughter, her grandmother, the preceptor and finally, the Buddha, generates the momentum of the narrative. The dispossession of the granddaughter of narratorial control means that the reader no longer attributes a "homogeneous attitudinal voice" to the narrator with the resulting destabilization of textual meaning: the reader is left feeling uncertain as to whether the title "cut-head" is actually an insult. Nevertheless, since the Commentary presents the Buddha as the ultimate source of authority in the textual world, the reader must accept the adjudication he gives.

In the above examples, it has been demonstrated that, for one view to remain at the centre of the reader's attention, control of the narratorial voice is necessary. In the first example, the narratorial voice places itself beyond the reach of its rivals; in the second example, dispossession of rival narrators is achieved by saying nothing; in the third, a rival narrator is identified and prevented from saying anything and in the fourth example, the rival narrator cannot be silenced.

### Supernatural Powers

A common feature of these stories is the way in which supernatural powers are used as a device whereby the disenfranchising of other views is achieved. In the narrative of the Four Novices, the exercise of supernatural powers is used to ensure that rival narrators are rendered powerless and present no opposition to the setting forth of a particular viewpoint and as such serves as a motif, representing the substitutive and dispossessive capacities of the narrative (Reid 1992: 66). The display of supernatural powers is a key feature of the Dhammapada Commentary. Since the Buddha and his followers are one amongst several groups of recluses, which possess similar forms of supernatural power, in order to determine whose powers are greater, a competition involving the display of supernatural powers occurs. For example, a group of people discuss what to

do about their disaster-stricken city:

Others suggested the following plan of action, “There are six teachers possessed of great supernatural power; let them but come hither and the plagues will instantly subside.” Others said, “A Supremely Enlightened One has arisen in the world, for he, the Exalted One, preaches the Law which avails for the welfare of all living beings, and he possesses great magical power and great supernatural power; if he but comes hither these plagues will instantly subside.” (HOS 30. 169)

In each case, the Buddha and his followers are shown to possess superior supernatural powers. In losing the competition, the other groups also lose the chance for their perspective to be put forward.

The terms used most frequently in the Dhammapada Commentary to designate supernatural powers are *anubhāva* (supernatural power) and *iddhi* (magical power). *Iddhi* includes supernormal or magical faculties and is ascribed to superhuman beings such as Nāgas or deities, as well as being a power traditionally attributed to groups of ascetics and wanderers.<sup>15</sup> *Iddhi* forms one of the components of the Six Superknowledges (*abhiññā*). It includes the power to become invisible, to travel through air, to walk on water, to travel to the moon. Moggallāna is described as the foremost of those possessing magical power (DhpA iii 202)<sup>16</sup> and in the Commentary, he features in several episodes displaying this attribute. For example, a treasurer, nicknamed Miserly Kosiya, has gone to great lengths to eat some fried cakes without having to share them with anyone.<sup>17</sup> He is sitting at the top of his seven-floor mansion and waiting for his wife to fry the first cake when he notices that Moggallāna is

<sup>15</sup> For example, the ascetic (*tāpasa*) Nārada is described in a Story of the Past as possessing great supernatural power (*mahānubhāva*) and uses the power of his magic (*iddhibala*) to prevent the sun from rising (DhpA i 41).

<sup>16</sup> This is evident from one narrative in the Commentary. The female lay disciple, Visākhā, desiring to begin the construction of a dwelling-place for the community, has the choice of whichever monk she likes to remain behind with her while the Buddha and his retinue make a journey. Visākhā has a fondness for Ānanda but realizes that Moggallāna will be of more immediate use to her:

Now although she was especially fond of Elder Ānanda, yet, thinking to herself, “Elder Mahāmoggallāna possesses great magical power [*iddhimā*], and with his assistance my work will be made easy,” she took the bowl of Elder Mahāmoggallāna. (HOS 29.80)

and Moggallāna employs his supernatural powers to procure building materials.

<sup>17</sup> This attitude is related to wrong view described above and it is emphasized in a conversation between the treasurer and his wife. Once his wife has ascertained that the treasurer desires to eat fried cakes, she offers to cook enough for the population of the town but the treasurer insists that this is not necessary:

“Why concern yourself about them? They might better work and earn money for themselves to buy food.” “Very well, I will bake enough cakes to feed the inhabitants of one street.” (HOS 29. 50)

and the conversation continues substitutively in the same vein, until his wife agrees to fry cakes for the treasurer alone.



standing poised in the air outside the window in the customary posture indicating readiness to receive almsfood. Try as he might, the treasurer cannot persuade Moggallāna to pass on to another household and reluctantly agrees to give him one cake. The comical antics which follow, involving huge cakes cooked from tiny pieces of dough and the attempt to separate cakes which remain stuck together, finally cause the treasurer to lose his desire for the cakes.<sup>18</sup> Moggallāna conveys the treasurer and his wife to the monastery at Jetavana so that they might offer the fried cakes to the Buddha. In the Dhamma Hall on the following day, the monks describe with admiration of the magic powers of Moggallāna:

“See, brothers, the supernatural power of Elder Mahāmoggallāna! ... Oh, how great is the supernatural power of the Elder!” (DhpA i 373)

Through the exercise of supernatural powers, Moggallāna gains control of the narratorial voice from the treasurer, whose wrong view is thereby refuted.

Very rarely does Moggallāna display other powers besides *anubhāva* and *iddhi*: it is usually the Buddha who is attributed any of the other Superknowledges in the Dhammapada Commentary. The following dialogue is part of a conversation between followers of two different renouncer-groups:

Garahadinna asked Sirigutta, “What does your Teacher [the Buddha] know?” “Oh, sir, do not speak thus! There is nothing beyond the range of my Teacher’s knowledge. He knows all about the past, present and future. In sixteen different ways he comprehends the thoughts of all living beings.” “If this be true, I know not why you have not told me about it all this time. Very well. Go to your Teacher and invite him for tomorrow. I should like to entertain him. Beg him, with his five hundred monks, to accept my hospitality.” (HOS 29. 95-6)

In addition, the Buddha also possesses the knowledge of his own previous existences (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*)<sup>19</sup> and the ability to see karmic fate of all beings in the universe and realms of rebirth faring well or ill according to their deeds (*cutūpapātañāṇa*).<sup>20</sup> As such, these powers do not differ greatly from those exhibited

<sup>18</sup> This is signified by the sweat which pours from the body of the treasurer (DhpA i 371).

<sup>19</sup> The Buddha’s knowledge of his own previous existences also extends to the previous existences of others:

When the monks heard those words of the Teacher, they asked him, “But, Reverend Sir, what was his deed in a previous state of existence?” The Teacher replied, “Well then, monks, listen.” And with reference to the ghost’s former deed, he related the following. (HOS 30. 153)

<sup>20</sup> The Buddha uses the Supernatural Vision (*dibbacakkhu*) in order to determine those who have the predispositions to be established on the path of spiritual attainment:

On that day, very early in the morning, the Exalted One arose from a Trance of Great Compassion. And for the purpose of seeing those who had made their Earnest Wish under



by other recluses.<sup>21</sup> For example, the brahman, Vaṅḡsa, has the power to determine the rebirth, except he does so by tapping the skull of a deceased person. The Buddha presents him with five skulls, one of which belonged to an arhat. Vaṅḡsa correctly determines four of the rebirths by tapping on the first four skulls but is confounded by the skull of the arhat because no rebirth has taken place (DhpA iv 226-8). Through the refutation of erroneous views, the conversion of a rival recluse is achieved, indeed, one who was popular with lay supporters.<sup>22</sup>

In the Vaṅḡsa narrative, a dispute is generated between the followers of the Buddha and the Brahmins over whose powers are greater and this precipitates the test for Vaṅḡsa. A similar pattern is found in the narrative about Sirigutta and Garahadhinna. Garahadhinna adheres to the Nigaṇṭha whilst his friend, Sirigutta, is a follower of the Buddha. Sirigutta becomes irritated by the way Garahadhinna claims that his teachers are more worthy to receive offerings than the Buddha. In order to teach his friend a lesson, Sirigutta invites the Nigaṇṭhas and humiliates them in order to show the emptiness of their claims to superior magical powers. Garahadhinna, seeking revenge, returns the invitation, assuming that the Buddha does not possess the powers his follower, Sirigutta, claims for him. By his supernatural power, the Buddha is able to predict the kind of hospitality Garahadhinna has planned:

The Teacher considered within himself, “What does he intend to do to us?” Immediately he became aware of the following, “He will cause a great pit to be dug between two houses and will cause eighty cartloads of acacia-wood to be brought and dumped into the pit, completely filling it. Then he will set the wood on fire and seek to humiliate us by causing us to be thrown into this charcoal pit.” (HOS 29. 96)

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previous Buddhas, those the roots of whose merit were fully developed, brethren capable of conversion, he surveyed the universe with the eye of a Buddha, spreading the Net of his Knowledge over the ten Cakkavāla Worlds. (HOS 28. 160)

In this connection, he also employs the power to penetrate minds of other people to discern their mental state. This ability is necessary to teach Dhamma in accordance with disposition:

Hearing the shouts of applause which proceeded from the multitude, the Teacher straightaway looked into the hearts of the great multitude, and in sixteen ways perceived the disposition of mind of each one. So quick is the movement of the mind of the Buddhas, that in case any person took pleasure in any portion of the Law or in any miracle, the Buddha preached the Law and performed a miracle in accordance with the temper and disposition of every such person. As he thus preached the Law and performed miracles, a great multitude of living beings obtained clear comprehension of the Law. (HOS 30. 47)

<sup>21</sup> Knowledge of previous existences, Supernatural Vision and Knowledge of the Destruction of Outflows, collectively known as the Three Knowledges (*tevijjā*), are reinterpreted in the Buddhist context, according to Bond, who describes how *tevijjā* in the Pāli tradition is a reinterpretation of the Brāhmanical ideal of wisdom as being versed in the Three Vedas (1988a: 149).

<sup>22</sup> The narrative describes how Vaṅḡsa had been adopted by a group of brahmins, who earned a living from his power.

and the Buddha goes on to describe how he will use his powers to thwart Garahadinna's plot. In this story, the supernatural powers of the Nigaṇṭha and the Buddha are outlined and when compared, the Buddha's powers are demonstrated to be superior.

In the Pāli Commentarial tradition, the exercise of supernatural powers is a frequent occurrence: the Buddha and his followers constantly demonstrate their various powers. However, this area generates a tension within the Dhammapada Commentary. It seems to be acceptable in some circumstances for only the Buddha to perform marvels but on other occasions his followers are permitted to as well. Consequently, it could be argued that there appears a degree of inconsistency between the narratives. The situation can be illustrated with an episode involving the Buddha and Kassapa (DhpA i 258-60). Kassapa develops Vision (*āloka*) and, with Supernatural Vision, watches the disappearing and arising of beings. The Buddha discerns with Supernatural Vision Kassapa's preoccupation and tells him that even with Buddha-knowledge, there is no limit to beings leaving one world and being born into another is unlimited.<sup>23</sup> In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa sheds some light on what seeing the passing away and reappearing of beings involves for *Buddhaputta*:

*Passing away and reappearing*: he cannot see them with the Supernatural Vision actually at the death moment or at the moment of reappearance. But it is those who, being on the verge of death, will die now that are intended as 'passing away' and those who have taken rebirth-linking and have just reappeared that are intended by 'reappearing'. What is pointed out is that he sees them as such passing away and reappearing (PPn 465-6)

It is possible that the Buddha tells Kassapa that it is not in his range to see beings at exactly their death moment and birth moment. Hence his final observation:

To know them is beyond your range, Kassapa, for your range is very slight. It comes within the range of the Buddhas alone to know and to see *in their totality* the rising and falling of living beings. (HOS 28. 311-2; emphasis added)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Burlingame's translation of this contains the following contradictory statements:

Knowledge of the rising and falling of living beings may not be encompassed even with the Knowledge of a Buddha. (HOS 28. 311)

It comes within the range of the Buddhas alone to know and to see in their totality the rising and falling of living beings. (HOS 28. 311-2)

and gives the impression that the Buddha is admonishing Kassapa for wasting his time contemplating things beyond his comprehension. But it is not knowledge of rebirth that is *aparichinno* but rebirth itself, in the sense that the birth and death of beings continues even if a person possesses the knowledge of a Buddha. The following rendering makes slightly more sense:

Even with Buddhaknowledge, there is no limit to the rising and falling of beings (*sattānaṃ cutāpapāto nāma buddhañāṇena pi aparichinno*, DhpA i 259)

<sup>24</sup> A similar statement is made by the Buddha to Sāriputta. Sāriputta has assigned an unsuitable

A narrative in the *Samyuttanikāya* describes a similar encounter between the Buddha and Kassapa about knowledge of the death and rebirth of living beings (S ii 194-225). The Buddha describes his own ability to see with Supernatural Vision beings as they die and are reborn and he attributes exactly the same capability to Kassapa:

Brothers, as much as he wishes, Kassapa can see with pure Supernatural Vision exceeding that of men, the death and rebirth of beings, inferior or superior, of good colour or bad, happy or unhappy; he knows how they fare according to their deeds. (S ii 214)<sup>25</sup>

It now becomes clear that there is a different purpose at work in the Dhammapada Commentary.<sup>26</sup> It seems to be important in this text to establish that the Buddha alone possesses powers superior to any other individual or group, including his own followers.<sup>27</sup> Framing the narrative in the Dhammapada Commentary intertextually with the *Samyuttanikāya* account reveals this as a preoccupation of the Commentary.

Nevertheless, the issue of the exercise of supernatural powers has more far-reaching implications, especially since the Dhammapada Commentary contains an acknowledgement of the fact that the utilization of supernatural powers by members of the Saṅgha constitutes an infringement of the monastic discipline. While this appears to be the case, members of the community continue to display supernatural powers. Rather than simply construe an inconsistency within the commentary, a more fruitful line of enquiry would be to investigate the co-existence of supernatural powers with the *vinaya* prohibition in the Dhammapada Commentary.

The *Cullavagga* provides the narrative setting leading up to the institution of the prohibition by the Buddha (Vin ii 110-12). A Rājagaha merchant has had a block of sandalwood carved into a bowl. After suspending the bowl from a height, he announces that he will give the bowl to whichever *samaṇa*, *brāhmaṇa* or arhat retrieves it using supernatural power alone. The leaders of the six so-called heretical groups each

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subject of meditation because he is unable to discern the disposition (*ajjhāsayā*) of the monk. The Buddha says to him:

“As for knowledge of the thoughts and inclinations, this is a power pertaining only to the Buddhas, to those that fulfilled the Perfections and attained Omniscience, causing the Ten Worlds to shout for joy.” (HOS 30. 162)

<sup>25</sup> *Kassapo pi bhikkhave yāvadeva ākaṅkhati dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passati cavamāne [uppajjamāne hīne paṇite suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate] yathākammupage satte pajānāti.*

<sup>26</sup> This is not necessarily the case in the *Samyuttanikāya* account, which reads like a quasi-hagiography of Kassapa, a portrayal which is mirrored elsewhere in the Dhammapada Commentary itself in a different context (DhpA ii 167-70).

<sup>27</sup> The Commentary contains an extended account of the Double Marvel, performed by the Buddha at Saṁkassa (discussed below), which makes this purpose very clear.



in turn demand the bowl from the merchant but it falls to the monk, Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, to demonstrate his magic powers. He rises into the air, obtains the bowl and presents it to the merchant, who fills it with richly flavoured almsfood. The Buddha, learning of the incident from the excited spectators, chastises Piṇḍola before the assembled Saṅgha and institutes an offence of wrongdoing (*dukkata*) for the demonstration of supernatural powers before householders.<sup>28</sup>

The Dhammapada Commentary includes a version of the sandalwood bowl incident which forms the preface to the demonstration of supernatural powers by the Buddha. More attention is paid in this account of the sandalwood bowl incident to constructing the scene in accordance with the Commentary's particular preoccupation with views. Thus, in addition to the circumstances of acquiring the sandalwood bowl, the merchant of Rājagaha is described as holding neither right nor wrong view but as "sitting on the fence".<sup>29</sup> Having proclaimed the rules of the competition for the bowl, the merchant also adds a promise that he and his family will become followers of whichever arhat succeeds in taking the bowl. Thus, at the very beginning of the account, it is made clear that rather than the bowl itself, the prize is potential converts.

It transpires that even more is at stake than first appears. The reason why Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja decides to obtain the bowl is given in the Dhammapada Commentary as the credibility of the Buddha's message (*sāsana*). Since none of the six heretical teachers is able to retrieve the bowl, some spectators declare that this is evidence for the lack of arhats in the world.<sup>30</sup> Overhearing this conversation, Moggallāna exhorts Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja to display his supernatural powers and convince the sceptics otherwise:

Hearing this talk, the Venerable Moggallāna the Great said to the Venerable Elder Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, "Brother, you have heard the conversation of these men; *they talk as though they were challenging the message of the Buddha*. Now you are possessed of great magical power, you are possessed of great supernatural power; go fly through the air and take this bowl." (HOS 30. 37; emphasis added)

<sup>28</sup> The commentary (Sp 1203) on this section of the *Cullavagga* is interesting. It states that the kind of demonstration of supernatural power which is being objected to is one involving miracle-working (*vikubbanaiddhi*) rather than powers of concentration (*adhiṭṭhānaiddhi*). Thus the objection is to the use of supernatural powers to perform marvels. The attempt is to differentiate between types of magic powers and, by implication, to devalue those magic powers used by other groups of *samāna*.

<sup>29</sup> lit. "one who by nature stands in the middle" (*majjhataḍḍhātuka*). The treasurer has not decided which renouncer group he favours.

<sup>30</sup> This is part of wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*):

... there are in the world no recluses and brahmins who have reached the highest point, who have proceeded rightly and who proclaim this world and the world beyond, having realised them by their own superknowledge. (M iii 71-72; cf. A iv 226)

The preoccupation with correcting this view can be discerned as a distinctive feature of narratives about monastic deportment.



It is thereby made clear in the text that the performance of Piṇḍola's marvel is in answer to a direct challenge from those holding an erroneous view rather than simply to obtain the bowl.

The description of the marvel in the Dhammapada Commentary is more detailed than its counterpart in the *Cullavagga* and also diverges somewhat, with the original aim of retrieving the sandalwood bowl lost in the description of Piṇḍola's powers, and the repetition of the marvel for the benefit of those who missed the first performance, again indicating that the larger issue is correcting the erroneous view by demonstrating that there are arhats in the world. As in the *Cullavagga* account, the Buddha reprimands the Elder:

“Bhāradvāja, why did you do this?” Thereupon the Teacher rebuked the Elder, caused him to break the bowl to pieces, and directed him to give the fragments to the monks to grind into powder for sandal-paste. And he laid down a precept.<sup>31</sup> (DhpA iii 203)

Unlike the *Cullavagga* account, the content of the precept is not specified, again indicating that the focus of the issue has changed and further substantiation follows when the heretics claim that they would not display their powers “for the sake of a wooden bowl” (HOS 30. 39). This is a noticeable shift, for in the *Cullavagga* narrative, this is the way in which Piṇḍola is reprimanded by the Buddha for going after a “wretched wooden bowl” (BD V 151).

The text then sets up a possible objection to the precept. The heretics declare that they will perform marvels together with the Buddha, assuming that the Buddha will not himself infringe the precept he has instituted and they will thereby win the competition by default. Their plan backfires when King Bimbisāra asks for clarification on the matter of the precept and the Buddha states unequivocally that the rule applies not to him but to his followers. Little do the heretics realize that the competition has now moved to an altogether higher level and shortly afterwards they are dismissed from the narrative arena by the actions of the god Sakka.<sup>32</sup>

At this point, it seems that the position on the exercise of supernatural powers has been defined in the Commentary: it is permissible for the Buddha to perform public marvels but not for his followers. However, even though the Buddha has declared the

<sup>31</sup> Burlingame adds: “... forbidding the exercise of the supernatural powers for such purposes in the future.” but this is not found in the Pāli (HOS 30. 38).

<sup>32</sup> Sakka causes the heretics' pavilion to be blown down, the sun to scorch them and make them sweat, the wind to cover them with dust, the rain to speckle their bodies so that they flee from the narrative arena with the appearance of mottled cows (DhpA iii 208).

precept forbidding the display of magic powers, there follows a series of offers from the Buddha's followers, each with substantial spiritual attainment and possessing magic powers, to perform marvels on his behalf.<sup>33</sup> As the number of offers increases, so does the status of the person making the offer, from Gharāṇī, a female lay disciple to Moggallāna, one of the Buddha's close aides. It is not sufficient to conclude that here the Commentary is being inconsistent in juxtaposing the Buddha's precept and the offers to take his place. It is important to view the offers to perform marvels as representing bids to take control of the narratorial voice, the side of the story at the centre of the reader's attention.<sup>34</sup> Narratorial control is retained as the Buddha declines the offers and the potential rival narrators relinquish their claims. This is underlined by a feature of the exchange between the Buddha and his supporters. Gharāṇī, the female lay disciple thinks to herself:

“The Teacher declines my offer; doubtless there is some one else able to perform a greater miracle than that which I am able to perform.” *So saying, she stepped aside.* (HOS 30. 43; emphasis added)

In this case, Gharāṇī and other potential rival narrators remove themselves from the narrative arena. The Buddha has created for himself a jewelled walkway in the air from where he listens to the offers from his followers. Certain of control of the narratorial voice, the Buddha descends the jewelled walkway and performs the Double Marvel in the midst of the assembled company.<sup>35</sup>

This entire episode makes sense only if the exercise of supernatural powers is understood as a motif for gaining and retaining control over the narratorial voice rather than the exercise of supernatural powers *per se*. The display of supernatural powers is a mode in which gaining or retaining control of the narratorial voice is expressed. Thus, it is the case that most displays of supernatural power in the Dhammapada Commentary occur in the context of a competition with potential or actual rival narrators. In the narrative of the Double Marvel, firstly Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, then the heretics and finally various of the Buddha's followers all present challenges to narratorial control.

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<sup>33</sup> There are offers from six of the Buddha's followers (DhpA iii 209-12): Gharāṇī, a female lay disciple, a Never-Returner and possessor of magic power; Culla Anāthapiṇḍika, a male lay disciple and Never-Returner; Cīrā, a seven-year old female novice with the Discriminations; Cunda, a seven-year old male novice with the Discriminations and extinguished Outflows; the nun Uppalavaṇṇā and Moggallāna. No attainments are listed for the latter two figures as they are well-known in the textual world.

<sup>34</sup> The offers work substitutively but no destabilization of textual meaning occurs because narratorial control is retained.

<sup>35</sup> The description of Double Marvel is followed by analysis explaining in detail how such a feat was possible.

There are other instances in the Commentary in which the bid for control of the narratorial voice takes the form of a competition involving the display of supernatural powers. In one instance (DhpA iii 241-7), Aggidatta, a house-priest of King Pasenadi, retires from the world and becomes the leader of a group of ascetics. The Buddha becomes aware that Aggidatta's group possesses the dispositions to become arhats and he says to Moggallāna:

“Moggallāna, do you observe that the Brāhman Aggidatta is urging upon the multitude a course of action *other than the right one*? Go and admonish them.” (HOS 30 64; emphasis added)

Moggallāna makes his way to Aggidatta's residence and is told there is nowhere for him to spend the night, except for a pile of sand which is in the possession of a Nāga king, Ahicchatta. Moggallāna and the Nāga king compete for the pile of sand using their supernatural powers of self-combustion and Moggallāna's superior skill wins him the sandcastle. Fearing that Moggallāna has been overcome by the Nāga king, Aggidatta and his followers approach the pile of sand to find the Nāga king waiting upon Moggallāna. While the group is admiring the superior powers of Moggallāna, the Buddha arrives on the scene:

Said the sages to the Elder, “Is this man greater than you?” The Elder replied, “This is the Exalted One, the Teacher; I am only his disciple.” The Teacher seated himself on the summit of the pile of sand. The company of sages said to each other, “If such is the supernatural power of a mere disciple, what must the supernatural power of this man be like?” (HOS 30. 65-6)<sup>36</sup>

By acknowledging the superiority of the Buddha's powers, Moggallāna yields control of the narratorial voice to the Buddha. From the top of the heap of sand, the Buddha facilitates the conversion of Aggidatta and his followers. Once again, the Buddha places himself in a position beyond the reach of rival narrators. In this episode, supernatural powers are used to usurp control of the narratorial voice. The issue is not *that* Moggallāna has exercised his magic powers but *why*: Moggallāna gains possession of the pile of sand and thereby control of the narratorial voice, which he then relinquishes to the Buddha, in order that the Buddha may establish Aggidatta and his followers on the path to spiritual attainment. In the *Cullavagga* account of the sandalwood bowl

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<sup>36</sup> This is similar to the offers to perform marvels from the Buddha's followers above:

“People will ask, ‘Who is that?’ and other people will answer, ‘That is Gharanī. If such is the supernatural power of a woman, what must the supernatural power of a Buddha be like?’ Under such circumstances the heretics will flee away without so much as waiting to see you.” (HOS 30. 43)

incident, no apparent motive is given for Piṇḍola's feat, except to retrieve the bowl. The conversation amongst the spectators, overheard by Moggallāna, is inserted in the Dhammapada Commentary as the reason why Piṇḍola undertakes the performance and the net result of the exercise of superior supernatural powers is the gaining of followers. On discerning the motivation underlying the display of supernatural power in the narratives, it becomes more difficult to sustain the position of inconsistency on this issue in the Commentary.

### PREOCCUPATIONS AND VIEWS

By observing the substitutive and dispossessive features of the narratives, it appears that the gaining and retaining of followers is presented as a primary goal in the narratives of the Dhammapada Commentary. As part of this strategy, the worthiness of the monastic community as recipients of lay support is emphasized and as such, the reader frames the Commentary intertextually with narratives from the *Vinayapiṭaka*. It now remains to investigate how the narratives present what constitutes acceptable monastic behaviour.

### Deportment

An explanation for this preoccupation can be developed from a motif similar to that of the monks' discussion described above. In the Commentary, the Buddha's attention is drawn to a misdemeanour by the monks reporting the matter to him. For example, a monk, accustomed to a high standard of living accumulates many requisites, a fact which does not go unnoticed by a group of monks who ask him:

“Whose are these requisites, brother?” “They belong to me,” replied the monk. “Brother, the Exalted One permits a monk to possess only three robes; but you, although you have retired from the world and become a monk under the dispensation of a Buddha who is satisfied with but little, have taken upon yourself to possess these many requisites.” So saying they led him to the Teacher and reported the matter to him ... (HOS 29. 308)<sup>37</sup>

This occasion is not one after which the Buddha institutes a rule about possessions: it is

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<sup>37</sup> The use by the monks of the epithet *Bhagavā*, commonly found in the *Vinayapiṭaka* to refer to the Buddha, indicates to the reader how this narrative is to be framed intertextually. In the *Mahāvagga* and *Suttavibhaṅga*, the Chabbaggiya monks are criticized for possessing more than the one set of three robes allowed by the Buddha (Vin i 289f, iii 195f). Burlingame (HOS 29. 308) cites a *Jātaka* (J i 126-33).



clear that such a guideline already exists, since the group of monks state that only three robes are to be held by an individual monk.<sup>38</sup> In this case, it can be argued that the text has a different strategy. Angered at the charge of avarice, the monk throws off all but one robe and is rebuked by the Buddha for abandoning modesty since in a previous existence as a water-demon (*udakarakkhasa*) he acted with restraint for twelve years. The monks ask the Buddha to explain the matter and he begins a Story of the Past. In this episode, the emphasis is on what constitutes acceptable conduct (being satisfied with little) and the explanation for the monk's immodest actions. In effect, what the text provides is a diffusion of culpability and rehabilitation of the monk and restoration of the uprightness of the monastic community. The Story of the Past plays a significant role in highlighting this.

It is not only individual monks who are responsible for *vinaya* infringements. The actions of the Chabbaggiya monks are frequently cited as giving rise to a new regulation.<sup>39</sup> This group makes several appearances in the Dhammapada Commentary:<sup>40</sup>

For one day the monks of the Band of Six put wooden shoes on their feet, and taking staves of wood in their two hands, walked up and down on the surface of a flat rock. The Teacher hearing the clatter, asked Elder Ānanda, "Ānanda, what is that noise?" The Elder replied, "The monks of the Band of Six are walking about in wooden shoes; they are making the clatter you hear." When the Teacher heard this, he promulgated the following precept, "A monk should control his deeds, his words and his thoughts." (HOS 30. 115)

In the *Mahāvagga*, this episode occurs as part of a whole series of rulings on shoes (Vin i 185-90). Here the degree of detailed elaboration appears designed to pre-empt differences in practice arising. The *Mahāvagga* continues:

Now at that time the group of six monks, thinking, "Wooden shoes are objected to by the Lord", having had young palmyra palms cut down, wore shoes of palmyra palm leaves; those young palmyra palms which were cut, withered. People looked down upon, criticised, spread it about, saying: "How can these recluses, sons of Sakyans, having had young palmyra palms cut, wear shoes of palmyra palm leaves? These young palmyra palms which were cut, are withering. These recluses, sons of Sakyans, are harming life that is one-facultied." (BD IV 251)

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<sup>38</sup> The Buddha reiterates this:

"But how comes it that you, monk, in spite of the fact that I have expressly taught that one should be satisfied with but little, have possessed yourself of so many requisites?" (HOS 29. 308-9)

<sup>39</sup> The group comprises Assaji, Punabbasu, Paṇḍuka, Lohitaka, Mettiya and Bhummajaka. The *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp 614) notes that Assaji and Punabbasu are the leaders of the Chabbaggiya monks and gives Mettiya and Bhummajaka in this role (Sp 579).

<sup>40</sup> Dhpa iii 48, iii 49-50, 382-4.

As a result of their unilateral actions, the Chabbagiya monks are perceived by the lay community as undermining the Saṅgha's worthiness to receive their patronage. The potential for difference in the group's interpretation of what constitutes appropriate conduct is perceived as a threat to the unity of the Saṅgha, the field of merit for the lay community.

In such stories, it is also dependence on lay supporters that is at stake. Deportment (*iriyāpatha*), which is pleasing, attracts potential supporters of the Saṅgha. Therefore it is crucial that monastic decorum be maintained, as the following illustrates:

For a householder named Citta, residing in the city of Macchikāsaṇḍa, observed the Elder Mahānāma<sup>41</sup>, one of the Band of Five, making his round for alms; and pleased with his deportment [*iriyāpathe pasīditvā*], took his bowl, invited him to his house, provided him with food, and at the conclusion of the meal [listened to the teaching and became a Stream-Winner]. (HOS 29. 144)

As a result, Citta becomes a lay follower who possesses unshakeable confidence (*acalasaddha*) and he is so impressed by Mahānāma that he donates his private park, the Ambāṭaka Grove, to the monks:

... desiring to make his own [private park the] Ambāṭaka Grove a place of residence for the Order, poured water into the right hand of the Elder and [presented] the grove to the monks. The moment he uttered the words, "The [message] of the Buddha is firmly established," the great earth shook to its ocean boundary. The great treasurer caused a splendid monastery to be erected in the grove, and thereafter the door stood open to monks who came from all four quarters. (HOS 29. 144)

Citta invites Sāriputta and Moggallāna and their retinues to take a meal. On hearing of this, the monk residing in Macchikāsaṇḍa, Sudhamma, takes umbrage and there follows a series of accusations and counter-accusations and the refusal of the two parties to be reconciled. In the Commentary, this forms the first part of the episode. The Commentary has established Citta as a generous benefactor and it becomes clear that it is important to retain the support of one such as him. The story continues with a description of Citta's visit to the Buddha to present alms of great magnitude and his reward.<sup>42</sup>

The narrative of Citta and Sudhamma also occurs in the *Cullavagga* (Vin ii 15-

<sup>41</sup> Mahānāma is one of the five ascetics to whom the Buddha addresses the teaching in the Deer Park. The others are Añña Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Assaji and Bhaddiya (Vin i 8-14; DhA i 86-7).

<sup>42</sup> The emphasis upon the significance of Citta's reward for his gifts is reiterated elsewhere in the Commentary (DhA iii 464), where the final section of the narrative is repeated as the context for DhA 303.

21). In both versions, the blame is laid firmly upon Sudhamma by the Buddha:

“You, an inferior, have insulted a faithful, believing disciple.” Having thus put the blame solely on the Elder, the Teacher sent him back to beg pardon of the disciple. (HOS 29. 145)

“It is not suiting, foolish man, it is not becoming, it is not fitting, it is not worthy of a recluse, it is not allowable, it is not to be done. How can you, foolish man, jeer at the householder, Citta, who has faith and is believing, who is a benefactor, a worker, a supporter of the Order, with a low thing, and scoff at him with a low thing?” (BD V 25)

The *Cullavagga* then describes the procedure for undertaking a formal act of reconciliation between Citta and Sudhamma. The importance of Citta as a lay supporter is noted but it seems more important in this narrative that the restoration of correct deportment of Sudhamma is publicly observed.<sup>43</sup>

### Discontent

Another potential threat to the worthiness of the Community to receive offerings from lay community lies in members who become discontented (*ukkaṇṭhita*, *anabhirata*). The lack of mental control is manifested in outward visible symptoms:

From that time forth, discontented and dissatisfied, he rehearsed the Thirty-two Constituent Parts of the Body no more and received instruction no more. He became emaciated, his skin shriveled up, veins stood out all over his body, weariness oppressed him and his body was covered with scabs. (HOS 29. 9; cf. DhP A iii 239, iv 19, 65-6)<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to note the pattern which occurs in the structure of the stories. Everyone involved in the matter is assembled before the Buddha, who listens to the case from each party in turn and then resolves the situation. This reflects a significant element in the ritual observance of the Saṅgha: a monk's confession of transgression must take place before the assembly of the Saṅgha (e. g. before recitation of *Pātimokkha* or during Pavāraṇā ceremony at the end of the Rainy Season retreat) since it is only then that the collective purity of the Saṅgha can be declared (Holt 1983: 125f). In the case of Citta and Sudhamma, the reconciliation between them is described by anticipation in the outlining of the procedures rather than actually detailed:

Then the monk Sudhamma, together with the companion messenger monk, having reached Macchikāsaṇḍa, asked the householder Citta to forgive him. He conducted himself properly, he was subdued, he mended his ways ... (BD V 29)

<sup>44</sup> Discontent can be so strong as to generate the desire to commit suicide:

At Sāvattthi we are told, the son of a respectable family, after hearing the Teacher preach Dhamma, was received into the Community and made his full profession. Becoming discontented after a time, he thought to himself, “The life of a layman is not suited to a youth of station like me; but even death would be preferable to remaining a monk.” So he went about considering ways of killing himself. (HOS 29. 247; cf. DhP A iv 118)

Discontent can be alleviated by an admonition (*ovāda*) from a fellow monk or can be mitigated by own effort:

After living for some time on the rich gifts and offerings which are bestowed upon the Buddhas, Elder Plowman became discontented. Unable to banish discontent, he said to himself, "I will no longer go about clad in yellow robes given by the faithful." So he went to the foot of the tree and all by himself admonished himself ... After he had admonished himself in this fashion for a while, his resolution weakened and he returned to the monastery again. After a few days, however, he became discontented once more. So he admonished himself in the same manner as before and changed his mind again. And in this manner, whenever he became discontented, he would go to the foot of the tree and admonish himself. (HOS 30. 261)

Naṅgalakula is teased by the monks on account of his fickle nature until one occasion when he claims spiritual attainment for himself and the monks report the matter to the Buddha. Here again the motif of the monks provides the opportunity for the Buddha to verify that Naṅgalakula is rehabilitated.

The rehabilitation can also take place with the help of a "good friend" (*kalyāṇamitta*), as in the case of Seyyasaka:

After the (formal) act of guidance had been carried out by the Order, he, choosing, associating with, visiting friends who were lovely (in deed), making them recite, interrogating them, came to be one who had heard much, one to whom the tradition was handed down; ... (BD V 12)

Seyyasaka becomes a fully rehabilitated member of the community through his association with "good friends".<sup>45</sup>

Admonitions can also be given by lay people. The novice Sānu receives an admonition delivered by his mother, a lay follower of the Buddha but it has no effect on his malaise (DhpA iv 19-20). Sānu's mother in a previous life, now an ogress, steps in and takes possession of him, silencing his voice (his discontent) and replacing it with her own. Having admonished Sānu, she releases him and he listens to the admonition of his human mother and finally gives up his desire to return to lay life. The Commentary makes it clear that the *yakkhinī* intervenes because she fears that she may lose the respect she is accorded as the Mother of Sānu by the deities who gather to hear Sānu intone Dhamma.<sup>46</sup> Thus in possessing the novice, she gains control of the

<sup>45</sup> Collins (1987: 68) points out that *kalyāṇamitta*, as a monastic virtue, is a regulating force like obedience or discipline rather than friendship.

<sup>46</sup> Burlingame's rendering is slightly misleading:

"If I gain possession of the novice, I shall be treated with respect by the powerful deities; I will therefore go to the novice and prevent him from returning to the life of a layman." (30.



narratorial voice but relinquishes it back to Sānu's human mother once she has confirmed her position as the Mother of the monk who intones Dhamma well and thereby the honour from the deities, which involves ensuring that Sānu remains a monk, even as far as making it physically impossible for him to carry out his decision to give up the monastic life by possessing him.

Several of these motifs described above are found in the story of Vakkali. This Elder finds the sight of the Buddha so pleasing that he decides to become a monk and gaze continually upon the Buddha. The Buddha admonishes Vakkali but to no avail:

Finally the Teacher thought to himself, "Unless this monk receives a shock [*saṃvega*], he will never come to understand." (HOS 30. 262)<sup>47</sup>

and so at the beginning of the rainy season, Vakkali is not permitted to accompany the Buddha. Unable to bear the misery of separation, Vakkali decides to commit suicide by throwing himself off the top of Mount Gijjhakūṭa. In order to prevent Vakkali losing the opportunity for spiritual attainment (as well as the public relations disaster of a suicide amongst his followers), the Buddha sends a radiant image of himself which appears before Vakkali:<sup>48</sup>

The Teacher, perceiving that he was depressed and weary of the world, thought to himself, "*If this monk receives no comfort or consolation from me, he will destroy his predispositions to the attainment of the Paths and Fruits.*" Accordingly he sent forth a radiant image of himself and displayed himself before the gaze of the monk. The moment the monk saw the Teacher, the weight of sorrow which oppressed him vanished. Then the Teacher, as though filling the dry bed of a lake with a torrent of water, caused intense joy and gladness [*balavapītipāmojja*] to spring up within the Elder. (HOS 30. 263; emphasis added)

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Since the yakkhinī is already dear to the deities and accorded respect on account of the novice (DhpA iv 19), the following rendering is suggested:

"Indeed so, the deities might be ashamed of me. While he's going astray, I'll go to and stop him. (*'mā heva kho me devatānaṃ antare lajjā uppajjeyya, gacchāmi 'ssa vibbhamane antarāyaṃ karomī' ti*, DhpA iv 20)

<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Sānu's mother, wishing to rouse her son back to the Order thinks to herself:

"Is there no way by which I can arouse his disgust? Is there no way by which I can arouse his repugnance?" (HOS 30. 210)

and she pronounces a verse which brings him to his senses. This is reminiscent of the role that deities play in stirring up monks who are wavering in their religious practice and functions to frame the text intertextually.

<sup>48</sup> This is a device employed by the Buddha to facilitate the spiritual attainment of a monk. He sends a radiant image (*obhāsa*) of himself which appears before the monk and pronounces a verse which brings about a form of spiritual attainment (DhpA i 246, 259, 282, 316; ii 202, 269, 275; iii 8-9, 112, 166, 420, 428; iv 53, 99, 118).

It is made clear in the narrative that the whole situation is engineered by the Buddha in order to facilitate Vakkali's spiritual development. Later, as he ponders the verses, Vakkali puts aside joy and delight and becomes an arhat with the Discriminations.

#### i) The Role of the Preceptor

One of the functions of a preceptor is to admonish and instruct a monk, who, for his part, must pay heed to the admonition. According to the *Mahāvagga*, the role of the preceptor was instituted as a result of criticism from the lay community, who compared the behaviour of the monks at almsgiving ceremonies with that of Brahmins:

Monks, I allow a preceptor. The preceptor, monks, should arouse in the one who shares his cell the attitude of a son; the one who shares his cell should arouse in the preceptor the attitude of a father. Thus these, living with reverence, with deference, with courtesy toward one another, will come to growth, to increase, to maturity in this *dhmma* and discipline." (BD IV 58-9)

The text then proceeds to detail the code of conduct between preceptor and monk (Vin i 45-55).

In one episode in the Dhammapada Commentary (DhpA ii 19-25), Kassapa admonishes one of his pupils (*saddhivihārika*), who had shirked his duties and claimed credit for work done by his fellow pupil. Angered by the admonitions, the monk destroys the Elder's hut and requisites and this event is commented upon by the local people (DhpA ii 22). The offending monk disappears from the narrative arena when he dies and he is reborn in the Avīci Hell. The matter is reported to the Buddha and he tells a Story of the Past by way of explaining the recalcitrant monk's behaviour (DhpA ii 22-3), ensuring that the actions are construed as the result of the monk experiencing the ripening of a previous misdeed, rather than as some failure in the discipline of the preceptor or the Saṅgha.

In the Dhammapada Commentary, the preceptor par excellence is Sāriputta.<sup>49</sup> Two examples will suffice to illustrate the necessity for retaining lay followers and to bring about spiritual attainment. In the first example (DhpA ii 84-103), Sāriputta asks permission from the Buddha to visit the novice Tissa and he sets out with all the chief disciples. They are met by a lay supporter of the novice, who, upon seeing Sāriputta at the head of the group, is overcome with joy (*pīti*) and announces their arrival. The villagers are keen to hear Dhamma and Sāriputta invites Tissa to begin but the villagers

<sup>49</sup> In four out of the six stories which feature a seven-year old novice, Sāriputta is the preceptor (DhpA ii 84f, 127f, 240f, iii 87f).

complain that he only knows the two lines “May you be happy, may you obtain release from suffering”.<sup>50</sup> So Sāriputta asks Tissa to explain the two lines<sup>51</sup> and he wins the approval of Sāriputta. However, this event divides the novice’s supporters. Some of them are affronted, whilst others are gratified:

At sunrise the supporters of the novice were divided into two parties. Some were offended and said, “Indeed we have never seen anyone so crude. How is it that, able as he is to preach such a sermon on the [teaching], and having remained for so long a time as he has with his mother and father, he failed to recite a single sentence of the [teaching] to those present?” But others were pleased and said, “It is fortunate for us who know not even the difference between good and evil that we have ministered to one so saintly, and that we have just now been able to hear the [teaching] from him.” (HOS 29. 158)

The potential loss of support from some lay followers is at stake and, at this point, the Buddha enters the narrative arena:

He that is Supremely Enlightened surveyed the world early in the morning of that day. Observing that the supporters of the Elder Vanavāsi Tissa had entered the Net of his Knowledge, he considered within himself what would be the result. And he came to the following conclusion, “Some of the supporters of the Elder Vanavāsi Tissa are offended, while others are pleased. Those who are offended at a novice like my son will go to Hell. I must go to him, for if I go, all will be reconciled with my son and will obtain release from suffering.” (HOS 29. 158)

It is made clear in the text that the spiritual attainment of the villagers is the prime motive for the Buddha’s intervention and he resolves the situation by emphasizing how fortunate they are to have a novice who is able to attract the attention of the Buddha and the Chief Followers.<sup>52</sup>

The Buddha also intervenes in another episode involving a pupil of Sāriputta,

<sup>50</sup> It seems that the novice has not taught Dhamma since he became an arhat. This sentence is absent from Burlingame’s translation, giving the impression that the novice knows nothing.

<sup>51</sup> Tissa’s interpretation of these two lines is summarized as follows:

... drawing the meaning and the matter from the five Nikāyas, and analyzing the attributes of being as set forth by the Buddha; namely, the Aggregates of Being, the Elements of Beings and the Organs and Objects of Sense. (HOS 29. 158)

This is an example of the inclusion of “doctrinal” material in the Commentary. It is given in summary form, presuming familiarity on the part of the reader, since to elaborate would interrupt the flow of the narrative unnecessarily.

<sup>52</sup> This point is also reiterated in the text by the villagers:

The villagers thought to themselves, “Indeed we *were* fortunate to be privileged to behold a novice who is able to win the favor of Buddhas and monks alike, and to give him alms.” So those who had been offended at the novice were pleased, while those who were satisfied were satisfied the more. At the conclusion of the words of thanksgiving many obtained the Fruit of Conversion and the Fruits of the Second and Third Paths. (HOS 29. 159)

who is struggling with a meditation subject assigned by Sāriputta, since the pupil's spiritual attainment is in jeopardy (DhpA iii 425-9). The text describes how the Buddha perceives that for five hundred previous existences the young monk had been reborn in a family of goldsmiths and so a pleasant subject of meditation would be more suitable to his disposition rather than one on revulsion selected by Sāriputta. Taking the young monk with him in order to consult with the Buddha, Sāriputta effectively hands over control of the narratorial voice to the Buddha, together with the young monk. The Buddha creates a large golden lotus by his magic power and gives this to the young monk to use as a meditation subject:

In the very act of taking the lotus flower from the Teacher, his heart became tranquil [*cittaṃ pasīdi*].

The young monk went to the boundary of the monastery, made a heap of sand, thrust the stalk of the lotus into it, and sitting down cross-legged before it, began the preliminary practice, saying, "Blood-red! Blood-red!" At that moment the Obstacles vanished and the Preliminary Trance set in. Thereupon he developed the First Trance and bringing it under control by the Five Modes, even as he sat there, attained the Second and Third Trance. When he had brought the Fourth Trance under control, he sat there diverting himself with the diversion of the trance. (HOS 30. 162)

The Buddha sends a radiant image (*obhāsa*) of himself which appears before the monk and after pronouncing a verse, the young monk becomes an arhat.<sup>53</sup> In receiving the subject of meditation from the Buddha, the monk becomes confident in the Buddha, enabling him to meditate effectively and to achieve the highest form of spiritual attainment. Once again, the initial lack of success in the young monk's meditation practice is explained in the text as the result of a previous existence of the young monk, rather than any breakdown in the relationship between preceptor and pupil and is indicative of the preoccupation with gaining and retaining followers.

### Dissent and Rivalry

Rather than constituting a punitive regime designed to regulate behaviour, the degree of elaboration of the monastic code indicates the desire to preserve the unity of the Saṅgha. To this end, the *Vinayaṭṭakā* focuses upon the rehabilitation of an offending monk, whereas the Dhammapada Commentary constructs a framework for the dispersal of blame through the use of Stories of the Past to explain the behaviour of the monk. As a consequence, a pure Saṅgha not only remains a "worthy field of merit" for the lay

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<sup>53</sup> This event is anticipated by the Buddha earlier in the narrative (DhpA iii 426).



community but also safeguards the defection of monks and lay followers to other renouncer groups.

The concern with rehabilitation and dispersal of blame demonstrated by the narratives of the *Vinayapiṭaka* and Dhammapada Commentary is consistent with the view that differences between monastic groups occurred over interpretation of the monastic code rather than over belief. A similar pattern can also be discerned in interactions between renouncer groups. Returning to the example of Aggidatta in the Dhammapada Commentary, Aggidatta comments on Moggallāna's lack of utensils:

“Are you an ascetic?” “Yes I am an ascetic.” “If you are an ascetic, where is your *khāri*-vessel? What ascetic utensils do you have?” (DhpA iii 243)

In this light, it is not surprising to find stories in the texts which describe dissent and rivalry both within the monastic community and external to it. A discussion of two episodes, both of which occur in the first book of the Dhammapada Commentary, should suffice to illustrate a concern with the threat of internal dissension. Comparison with other versions of this episode will help to identify those aspects of the narrative which are of importance in the text.

#### i) The Disputatious Monks of Kosambi

The first episode to be considered begins with a difference of interpretation about an aspect of conduct in the monastery. It appears to be an event of some importance since there are at least three versions: the Dhammapada Commentary (i 53-66), *Kosambakakkhandaka* (Vin i 337-59) and *Kosambījātaka* (J iii 486-90)<sup>54</sup>. The source of disagreement is an alleged infringement of *vinaya*. A monk has left in a vessel water with which he has washed himself after evacuating his bowels. His omission is discovered by another monk who informs him that it is an offence unless it was unintentional or through forgetfulness (*asati*). This monk then announces to his pupils that the first monk has infringed the discipline and a dispute ensues between the two monks and their supporters, culminating in the suspension<sup>55</sup> of the first monk being declared by his opponents. The detail of the alleged offence and subsequent dispute is found in the Dhammapada Commentary and *Jātaka* frame story. The identity of the two

<sup>54</sup> The occurrence of the dispute is also mentioned in the Udāna Commentary (UdA 248).

<sup>55</sup> The *Suttavibhāṅga* defines this as follows:

*Suspended* means: suspended for not seeing or for not making amends for or for not giving up an offence. (BD III 170; cf. Vin iv 232)

disputants is given: the first monk is an Expounder of Dhamma<sup>56</sup> (*dharmakathika*) and the second is a Transmitter of Discipline (*vinayadhara*). In the *Kosambakakkhandaka*, the identity of only one monk, the offending monk, is given:

But that monk had heard much, he was one to whom the tradition had been handed down; he was an expert on dhamma [*dharmadhara*], an expert on discipline [*vinayadhara*], an expert on the summaries [*mātikādhara*]; he was wise, experienced, clever; he was conscientious, scrupulous, desirous of training. (BD IV 483)

This is a formulaic expression frequently employed to describe a monk's status and as such is a rather positive characterization bestowed upon one supposed to have erred. Neither is his offence specified. The chapter ends with the *bahussuta* monk realizing his offence and asking to be reconciled with the Community. It seems that, in the *Kosambakakkhandaka*, the nature of the offence is not as important as the procedures for reconciliation and the avoidance of dissension.<sup>57</sup> However, in the Dhammapada Commentary and *Jātaka* account, the battle lines are rather more explicitly drawn up. The dispute is focussed on two monks, a *dharmakathika* and *vinayadhara*, from the same *ārāma* at Kosambi and this allows more of a conflict to develop over interpretation.<sup>58</sup> The division is emphasized in the description of the two sides:

Thenceforth even the supporters who furnished them the Requisites formed two factions. Even the nuns receiving instructions, even the protecting deities; their friends and intimates, the deities who dwell in the sky; beginning with these and extending to the world of Brahmā, all beings, even the unconverted, formed two factions. The quarrel extended from the Realm of the Four Great Kings to the Heaven of the Gods Sublime. (HOS 28. 176; cf. J i 486-7)

The characterization of *dharmakathika* in Dhammapada Commentary is not entirely positive and there are several instances in which such monks are responsible for creating dissension.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The *Jātaka* account identifies this monk as a *suttantika* (J iii 486).

<sup>57</sup> The *Kosambakakkhandaka* account is interspersed with other instances of dissension, which give rise to the story of Dīghāvū (Vin i 342-9).

<sup>58</sup> This would be more difficult in the *Kosambakakkhandaka* account, since the monk in question has both these abilities. *Dharmakathika* and *vinayadhara* form part of the company of monks to whom Dabba the Mallian assigns lodgings (Vin ii 74-5).

<sup>59</sup> For example,

The preacher of the Law thought to himself, "These two Elders are exceedingly soft. I may just as well drive both of them away and take up my residence in this monastery myself." (HOS 30. 154; cf. DhPA iv 39, i 155, iii 140)

In general, there does appear to be a preference for the Vocation of Insight over Texts in the Commentary.

The Dhammapada and Udāna Commentaries include a detailed episode of the Buddha's sojourn in the Protected Forest where he is looked after by an elephant.<sup>60</sup> The elephant is also described as wishing to enter into solitude and the detail of the episode is designed to emphasize the exemplary quasi preceptor-pupil relationship between the animal and the Buddha. Both Dhammapada and Udāna Commentaries describe in great detail the way in which the elephant ministers to the needs of the Buddha (DhpA i 58-9; UdA 250-1), similar to the way in which these duties are outlined in the *Mahākhandaka*. However, the analogy drawn between the Buddha as preceptor and the elephant as pupil only goes so far because as the Buddha tells the elephant, spiritual attainment cannot be achieved in an animal existence (DhpA i 63). Nevertheless, the elephant's exemplary conduct highlights the lack of such in the monks.

The emphasis in the *Kosambakakkhandaka* account is upon the necessity of avoiding schism and dissension in order to preserve the unity of the Saṅgha:

If we suspend this monk for not seeing the offence we cannot carry out the Observance together with this monk, we will carry out the Observance without this monk — from this source there will be strife, dispute, contention, brawls, for the Order, there will be schism in the Order, dissension in the Order, altercation in the Order, differences in the Order. Monks, that monk should not be suspended for not seeing an offence by monks bent on a schism. (BD IV 485)

and this is also explored in the Dhammapada Commentary:

Twice the Exalted One sent word, "Let them be united," and received the reply, "Venerable Sir, they refuse to be united." The third time he exclaimed, "The congregation of monks is rent asunder! The congregation of monks is rent asunder!" So saying, he went to them and pointed out to those who had pronounced the sentence of [suspension] the wrong involved in their act and to those who had failed to recognise offence the wrong involved in theirs. (HOS 28. 177)

However, in the Dhammapada Commentary, the inclusion of the Protected Forest episode reveals a more significant preoccupation: the consequences of withdrawal of lay support as a result of dissension. A Saṅgha rent by dispute will cause some lay people to withdraw their support but a disunited Saṅgha *without the Buddha at its head* is no longer a worthy field of merit for the lay community:

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<sup>60</sup> The *Kosambakakkhandaka* account mentions the elephant but does not include the detail and the *Jātaka* account mentions the forest but not the elephant. In the Udāna Commentary, the Buddha's desire to reside in solitude is attributed the *paribbājaka* ideal and the monks are discouraged from following after him (UdA 249).

People said, “These monks, after receiving admission at the hands of the Teacher, were unwilling to patch up their differences when the Teacher asked them to do so. It’s all their fault that we were unable to see the Teacher. To these monks, assuredly, we will neither give seats nor offer respectful salutations or other civilities.” And from that time on they showed them not so much as a sign of civility. (HOS 28. 178)

This is reiterated towards the end of the narrative by the Buddha, when the disputatious monks appear before the Buddha to ask his pardon:

Then they threw themselves at the feet of the Exalted One and asked him to pardon them. Said the Teacher,

“Monks, [serious was the deed] you committed when, after receiving admission as monks *at the hands of a Buddha like me*, in spite of my efforts to reconcile you, you refused to obey my words ... ” (HOS 28. 183; emphasis added)

This sentiment is expressed earlier in the narrative, from the point of view of individually named lay supporters:

From the city of Sāvatti, Anāthapiṇḍika, Visākhā, the eminent female lay disciple and other such great personages sent the following message to the Elder Ānanda,

“Reverend Sir, obtain for us the privilege of seeing the Teacher.” Likewise five hundred monks residing abroad approached the Elder Ānanda at the close of the rainy season and made the following request, “It is a long time, Ānanda, since we have heard a discourse on [the teaching] from the lips of the Exalted One. we should like, brother Ānanda, if you please, to have the privilege of hearing a discourse from the lips of the Exalted One.” (HOS 28. 180)

Here the repetition of the request works substitutively<sup>61</sup> and emphasizes the consequences of dissension. As each request or comment is made, the status of the individual making the request increases, culminating in a comment from King Pasenadi:

The king of Kosala, hearing that the [disputatious] monks of Kosambi had come to Sāvatti, approached the Teacher and said, “Reverend Sir, I’ll not allow those monks to enter my country.” “Great king, these monks are good men; only because of a dispute they had with each other they paid no attention to my words. Now they are coming to beg my pardon; let them come, great king.” Anāthapiṇḍika also said, “I will not allow those monks to enter the monastery.” [But when the Teacher opposed him, he was silent].<sup>62</sup> (HOS 28. 182-3)

<sup>61</sup> In the *Kosambakakkhandaka* account, a similar list of important people consult the Buddha on how to receive the disputatious monks (Vin i 354-6).

<sup>62</sup> Burlingame renders incorrectly this last sentence (*Bhagavatā paṭikkhito tuṇhī ahoṣi*) as, “But the Teacher took issue with him as he had with the king, and he was silent.” (HOS 28. 183)



The withdrawal of support from such significant patrons would be potentially damaging and this emerges as a significant preoccupation of narratives throughout the Commentary.

## ii) Rivalry between the Buddha and Devadatta

In the second episode to be examined, the threat of internal dissension is realized by the creation of a schism in the Community. The monk, Devadatta, is motivated by the desire for gain and honour and, after the Buddha refuses to hand over the leadership of the Saṅgha to him, Devadatta plots to kill him, enlisting the help of Ajātasattu, son of King Bimbisāra. Each plot fails and Devadatta loses the support of the lay community:

... the people raised a tumult and said, "Devadatta alone had the king killed and hired murderers and cast down the rock. But now he has turned the elephant Nālāgiri loose. Behold what manner of evildoer the king has on his hands!" The king then, hearing the words of the populace, caused Devadatta's five hundred cooking-vessels to be removed and did not thereafter minister to his wants. Likewise the citizens did not so much as offer food to him when he came to their houses. (HOS 28. 236)

As a result, Devadatta decides to cause a schism,<sup>63</sup> the basis of which is the acceptance of the Five Items.<sup>64</sup> More significantly, the reason for the schism is recorded in the *Cullavagga* account by including a conversation between Kokālika and Devadatta, who says:

"The recluse Gotama will not allow these. *Then we will win over the people by means of these five items.*"

and Kokālika replies:

"It is possible, your reverence, with these five items, to make a schism in the recluse Gotama's Order, a breaking of the concord. For, your reverence, *people esteem austerity.*" (BD V 276; emphasis added. cf. Vin iii 171)

The five items encourage the practice of austerity dissonant with the ideal set out in the monastic code of the Buddha and his followers. The basis of the schism is in practice rather than belief and presupposed on the idea that lay support will be attracted

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<sup>63</sup> According to the *Suttavibhaṅga*, causing a schism constituted an offence involving a formal meeting of the Community (Vin iii 171-3).

<sup>64</sup> The Five Items are forest-dwelling, begging, wearing of rags, living outdoors, vegetarianism (Vin iii 171). The items are listed together with practices which are to be discouraged, namely the practice of the Buddha and his followers.

by the outward austere deportment of the ascetics.

With these items outlined, the competition to gain the allegiance of lay followers begins. Indeed there are those who are impressed and Devadatta wins some followers:

Now at that time as many as five hundred monks, Vajjis of Vesālī, were newly ordained and were not properly versed; and these, thinking, “This is the rule, this is discipline, this is the Teacher’s instruction,” took voting tickets. (BD V 279; c. f. Dhpa i 142-3)

but it is not long before they are won back by Sāriputta and Moggallāna, who perform marvels and Devadatta’s downfall ensues.

The detail of Devadatta’s machinations are supplied in the *Cullavagga* account (Vin ii 180-206) but in the Dhammapada Commentary, there is little elaboration and the account culminates in a detailed description of the death of Devadatta. Frequent references to *Jātaka* narratives are made in this part of the narrative and on each occasion, the monks’ discussion motif serves to frame the text intra- and intertextually:

Again when the discussion took this turn, “Devadatta fell away both from gain and honour and from the high position of a monk,” the Teacher said, “Monks it is not the first time he has so fallen away; in a previous state of existence also he fell away.” So saying he related the [*Ubhatobhattha Jātaka*]<sup>65</sup> ... In this wise did the Teacher, while he was in residence at Rājagaha, relate many *Jātakas* about Devadatta. (HOS 28. 239; cf. i 144, 145, 149)

When Devadatta is finally swallowed up by the earth, destined for Avīci Hell, this event dominates the monks’ discussion and the text refers to three more sets of *Jātaka* in which Devadatta is swallowed by the earth in previous existences as a result of misdeeds. Here a strategy for the rehabilitation of Devadatta can be seen to be working through the inclusion of the *Jātaka* episodes: his behaviour is explained as being the ripening of past deeds. In this way, the reader’s attention is drawn to the location of narratives recounting instances of Devadatta’s wicked deeds in previous existences but because the story is not related in full, control of the narratorial voice is retained.

Devadatta’s attempts to take control of the Saṅgha represent bids for control of the narratorial voice. His final bid for control of the narratorial voice occurs when from his sick bed, he asks his followers to take him to see the Buddha but, as soon as his feet touch the ground in the Jeta-Grove, he begins to sink into the earth.<sup>66</sup> His schismatic

<sup>65</sup> In his translation, Burlingame provides the names of the *Jātaka* referred to by the verses (HOS 28. 238-42). Norman gives the references in footnotes but the Pāli does not specify the individual narratives.

<sup>66</sup> This is described by the monks to the Buddha as they witness Devadatta’s approach. Tension is heightened as the Buddha insists that Devadatta will not see him even if he enters the Jeta-Grove

enterprise is finally defeated when the Buddha makes a monk of him and his rehabilitation is complete:

And this he did because he became aware of the following, “If he shall remain a layman and not be received into the Order as a monk, inasmuch as he has been guilty of grievous crimes, it will be impossible for him to look forwards with confidence to future existence; but if he shall become a monk, no matter how grievous the crimes he has committed, it will be possible for him to look forwards with confidence to future existence.” (HOS 28. 240)

Devadatta’s attempts to gain control of the narratorial voice are partially successful: he wins some supporters but his control is usurped by Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna, as they win back the monks through the exercise of their supernatural power. In effect, his attempt to create schism is an attempt to usurp control of the narratorial voice, which is why it is necessary for the text to focus upon Devadatta’s final end and to have him well and truly ensconced and tortured in the Avīci Hell for his deeds.

In the *Cullavagga* account, Devadatta’s death and descent into hell is not described in detail but is referred to in a conversation between the Buddha and Upāli in which the rebirth-destination of various types of schismatics is outlined (Vin ii 204-6). In this case, since more attention is paid to allowing Devadatta’s views to be outlined, there is a risk that the reader’s attention will transfer to Devadatta’s side of the story. No space is given in the Dhammapada Commentary narrative for the detailing of this or any view of Devadatta’s and narratorial control is retained. The motivation behind Devadatta’s behaviour is explained through the reference to the *Jātaka* narratives and, with his subsequent rehabilitation, the probity of the Saṅgha is restored.

### iii) External Rivalry

Threats to the unity of the Saṅgha are also presented in the Dhammapada Commentary as originating from outside the Community. A group of renouncers referred to as “heretics” (*titthiya*)<sup>67</sup> is responsible for devising various schemes to discredit the Buddha. Two of the most dramatic plots are the false pregnancy of Ciñcā Māṇavikā (DhpA iii 178-83) and the murder of Sundarī (DhpA iii 474-8). In both of these episodes, the heretics are motivated by the same reason as Devadatta: loss of reverence and material support from the lay community:

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(DhpA i 146-7).

<sup>67</sup> Burlingame’s rendering of *titthiyā* as “heretics” is retained, since it reflects the perjorative use of the term in the Dhammapada Commentary.

And they gathered in the street and cried out, “Is the monk Gotama the only Buddha? We are also Buddhas! Does that alone which is given to him yield abundant fruit? That which is given to us returns abundant fruit also. Therefore to us do you give also; upon us do you bestow honour.” (HOS 30. 19)<sup>68</sup>

The heretics call upon a beautiful wandering ascetic (*paribbājikā*) named Ciñcā Māṇavikā to employ her skills to cast reproach on the Buddha and thereby regain lay support for the heretics. For several months, Ciñcā Māṇavikā pretends that she has been spending the night alone with the Buddha in the Perfumed Chamber in Jetavana and her convincing performance causes people to hesitate in their support for the Buddha and his followers:

After the lapse of a month and a half, whenever they asked her this question, she would reply, “I spent the night at Jetavana alone with the monk Gotama in the Perfumed Chamber.” And by her answer she caused doubts and misgivings to spring up in the minds of those who were as yet unconverted. And they said to themselves, “Is this true, or is it false?” (HOS 30. 21)

Then, feigning pregnancy, she appears before the Buddha in the Dhamma Hall and accuses him of neglecting her and her unborn child. The wooden block which she has tied to her belly to simulate the pregnancy comes loose, falls the ground and her deception is revealed (DhpA iii 181). Ciñcā Māṇavikā’s bid, on behalf of the heretics, for control of the narratorial voice has been thwarted by Sakka, whose attention is alerted by Ciñcā Māṇavikā’s accusations. He sends four deities in the form of mice to nibble the ropes which have secured the wooden block to her belly. The block falls and slices off her toes. She is then reviled by the people and, as she flees from the Jeta-Grove, she is swallowed up by the earth, engulfed in the flames of the Avīci Hell and as a result the offerings to the the Buddha and his followers increase.<sup>69</sup> With her death, the heretics lose their representative and any possibility of usurping control of the narratorial voice.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> cf. the heretics’ complaint at the beginning of the story of Sundarī:

“From the time when the monk Gotama arose in the world, we have lost the gain and honour which we received before and now no-one knows even whether we exist or not. With whom, pray, can we make common cause to cast reproach upon the monk Gotama in such wise as to destroy the gain and honour which are now his?” (HOS 30. 189)

This is similar to the opening of the narrative about Devadatta (DhpA i 138f).

<sup>69</sup> The text dwells with some relish on the description of Ciñcā’s descent into Avīci:

As she passed out of sight of the Tathāgata, the great earth split apart, an abyss opened under her feet, and flames shot up from the Avīci Hell. Thus was she swallowed up, enveloped as it were in a scarlet blanket such as is presented by wealthy families, and reborn in the Avīci Hell. (HOS 30. 22)

<sup>70</sup> The episodes involving Ciñcā Māṇavikā and Sundarī have a similar structure but Sundarī’s ends differently. The heretics have Sundarī killed and then proclaim her death to be the work of the Buddha



Since Sakka rather than the Buddha was responsible for revealing the ruse, it is then necessary for the Buddha's position to be reinforced. Again the monks' discussion motif introduces the material intra- and intertextually to support the position:

On the following day the monks began a discussion in the [Dhamma Hall]: "Brethren, Ciñcā Mānavikā, because she falsely accused the Possessor of Eminent Virtues, the Foremost Recipient of Offerings, the Supremely Exalted, came to utter ruin." The Teacher approached and asked, "Monks, what are you sitting here talking about?" (HOS 30. 22)<sup>71</sup>

The Buddha relates the *Mahāpadumajātaka*, which explicitly associates Ciñcā Mānavikā with similar behaviour. Ciñcā Mānavikā is not rehabilitated because she is not a member of the Saṅgha and it is underlined that the Buddha and his followers are not at fault.

The Dhammapada Commentary contains stories which feature renouncers from non-Buddhist traditions.<sup>72</sup> Some of these figures, such as Pūraṇa Kassapa and Makkhali Gosāla, are well-known and appear elsewhere in Pāli texts, each with their followers and lay supporters. In the Dhammapada Commentary, there appears to be a degree of rivalry between the Buddha and his followers and other renouncer groups. The text portrays an environment populated by several different groups of ascetics, each competing for lay supporters.<sup>73</sup> It is apparent that more than one type of renouncer

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and his followers. The people revile the monks and the king discovers who the real perpetrators are. He then causes the heretics to make the following proclamation:

'We caused this woman Sundarī to be killed because of desire to cast reproach upon the monk Gotama; there is no fault in the monk Gotama, or in the disciples of Gotama.' (HOS 30. 191)

Here, the heretics are given the opportunity to speak but are forced to proclaim a position contrary to their own. Thus, there is no need for the position to be reinforced, since the heretics have refuted their own position.

<sup>71</sup> The epithet ascribed to the Buddha by the monks above, "the Foremost Recipient of Offerings" (*aggadakkhiṇeyya*), is unusual in the Commentary and reiterates the idea that the Buddha and his followers are more worthy of donations than the heretics.

<sup>72</sup> The specific views of these groups are never propounded except for one instance where the group of monks discuss the difference between the Niganṭha and Acelaka:

"Brethren, these Niganṭhas are to be preferred to the Acelakas, who go entirely naked, for these ascetics at least wear a covering in front. These ascetics evidently possess a sense of modesty." Overhearing the discussion, the Niganṭhas said, "It is not for this reason at all that we wear a covering. On the contrary, even dust and dirt are actual individuals, endowed with the principle of life; and so, — for fear that they may fall into our alms-dishes, — for this reason we wear a covering." Arguments and counter-arguments followed between both parties of monks, and there was a long discussion. (HOS 30. 196)

The Acelakas are similarly criticized by Visākhā (DhpA i 400) and Culla Subhaddā (DhpA iii 467). There is a risk here of dispossession: the possibility that the Niganṭha could gain control of the narratorial voice but after the Buddha has pronounced the Dhammapada verse, the Niganṭha are stirred up (*saṃviggamānasa*) and they become monks. Burlingame omits this part from his translation (HOS 30. 197).

<sup>73</sup> Followers of other ascetic orders are also referred to as *sāvaka* (DhpA i 435; iii 492). In his translation, Burlingame (HOS 30. 199 et passim) does not always distinguish between "heretics"

could be entertained by an individual. In fact, the picture which emerges from the Dhammapada Commentary suggests that amongst the lay community, allegiances are switched very easily between groups of renunciators. For example, in one episode, Cūḷa Subhaddā, the daughter of Anāthapiṇḍika, has gone to live with her husband's family after her marriage. Her father-in-law, a treasurer, favours the Acela over the Buddha and his followers and entertains the Acela at festivals. Cūḷa Subhaddā refuses to even look upon the Acela and incurs the wrath of the treasurer:

Her father-in-law told his wife about the matter, saying, "This woman refuses to do reverence to my monks because she says they 'lack modesty'." Thereupon his wife said, "What manner of men are these monks of hers, that she praises them so highly?" ... In reply to the question of her mother-in-law, Subhaddā proclaimed the merits and the virtues of the Buddha and of the disciples of the Buddha. (HOS 30. 185-6)

As a result, Subhaddā wins the treasurer over to the Buddha:

When he saw the Teacher approach in all his splendour and majesty, [he became confident in him]. He rendered him high honor with garlands and other offerings, welcomed him to his house, saluted him, gave him abundant gifts, invited him again and again to be his guest, and for seven days gave him rich offerings. (HOS 30. 187)

Similarly, the Commentary contains a description of how a female follower is poached from one group of renunciators by another. This woman, the wife of a householder, looks after an Ājīvaka named Pāṭhika, as though he were her own son. One day her neighbours return from hearing the Buddha teach Dhamma and are full of praise:

When the woman heard her neighbours praise the Buddhas, she desired to go to the monastery and hear the Teaching. So she put the matter to the [Ājīvaka], saying, "Noble Sir, I would like to go and hear the Buddha." But as often as she

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(*titthiya*) and "those with wrong view" (*micchādiṭṭhika*) but the distinction is important, since *titthiya* refers specifically to other groups of renunciators, whereas *micchādiṭṭhika* has a more general application. One aspect of wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*) is the idea that there is no point in giving alms (M iii 71-72), a view which essentially challenges the fundamental value of the exchange between renunciators and lay followers by refuting the idea that supporting renunciators earns spiritual rewards. This view is held by the husband of Uttarā. Uttarā's husband is described as a holder of wrong view and it soon becomes clear that this means that he sees no value in almsgiving to groups of renunciators. Having procured the services of a courtesan to divert her husband for the last fortnight of the rainy season, Uttarā arranges to provide food for the Community. Her husband observes her making preparations:

"What is this foolish woman doing?" When he saw her going to and fro arranging for the feast, her body moist with sweat and sprinkled with ashes and smeared with charcoal and soot, he thought to himself, "Ah, in such a place the fool does not enjoy luxury and comfort. 'I will minister to the shaveling monkings,' thinks she; and her heart rejoices as she goes about." (HOS 30. 104)

made her request, the Ajīvaka dissuaded her from going, saying, “Do not go.” The woman thought to herself, “Since this one will not permit me to go to the monastery and hear the Teaching, I will invite the Teacher to my own house and hear the Teaching right here.” (HOS 29. 54-5; cf. Dhpa iii 155-6)

In effect, the story describes how the two sides, the Ājīvaka and the Buddha compete for the patronage of the woman. In the woman’s house, the Buddha teaches Dhamma and on hearing the woman’s applause, the Ājīvaka ascetic is unable to control himself. Having heaped abuse on both the woman and the Buddha, he runs off.

The concern with presenting an image of authenticity arises between groups of renouncers in the text.<sup>74</sup> One narrative from the Dhammapada Commentary recounts the institution of the practice of thanksgiving, after the monks came under criticism from their hosts for not expressing appreciation after the meal as other groups of renouncers do. When the Buddha hears a report of this, he institutes the practice of pronouncing the word of thanks (Dhpa iii 394).<sup>75</sup> It is noticeable that other renouncer groups harbour similar anxieties about their reputation. For example, a man joins the Ājīvaka and he professes to follow their code of conduct but, as the result of a previous misdeed,<sup>76</sup> spends his time in the latrines eating what people leave behind there. When the Ājīvakas discover what he is doing, they are horrified:

As soon as the Ājīvakas heard the news, they said to themselves, “Oh, what an outrageous thing he has done! If the disciples of the monk Gotama should hear of this, they would circulate evil report of us, saying, ‘The Ājīvakas make a practice of eating excrement.’ This man is not fit to remain with us.” So saying they expelled him from their Order. (HOS 29. 133)

Such episodes perhaps indicate that the environment in which the monastic community

<sup>74</sup> Concern over cases of improper conduct also appear to preoccupy lay followers. Visākhā is horrified when a group of women she has taken to a public park become extremely drunk:

Visākhā thought to herself, “These women have committed a gross impropriety. Now the heretics also will find ground of reproach and will say, ‘The female lay disciples of the monk Gotama go about drinking strong drink.’” (HOS 29. 328)

<sup>75</sup> This episode gains a brief mention in the *Cullavagga* and the motif of the offended lay community also appears to be an important feature:

Now at that time monks did not give thanks in a refectory. People looked down upon, criticised, spread it about, saying: “How can these recluses, sons of the Sakyans, not give thanks in a refectory?” (BD V 297)

This motif of lay disapproval is also found in the *Suttavibhaṅga* (Vin iii 44; 72, et passim).

<sup>76</sup> This is an important part and it is related first in the narrative because later, the man, Jambuka, becomes an arhat. On seeing Jambuka with the Buddha, the local people are presented with a choice for the presentation of their offerings. It is quickly made clear in the text that the Buddha is superior to Jambuka: Jambuka proclaims that he is a follower of the Buddha and he does this from a height of seven palmyras (Dhpa ii 62). The acknowledgement by an ex-follower of a rival leader as his teacher has a powerful persuasive effect: the people are thereby convinced of the superior power of the Buddha and Jambuka’s extreme behaviour is explained as the ripening fruit of a previous misdeed.



was established was one in which it had to define its identity not only in relation to other groups of renouncers but also in the light of those within the monastic tradition who held a different interpretation of the monastic discipline.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VINAYAPIṬAKA AND THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

Exegetical strategies can be discerned in the Commentary, designed to ensure that the position proposed by the text finds support elsewhere in the textual tradition. The number of references to narratives concerning matters of vinaya, some of which are more explicit than others,<sup>77</sup> indicate that the reader is to frame the Commentary intertextually with the *Vinayapiṭaka*, establishing a close connection between the texts. It has already been shown how narratives in both texts are concerned with rehabilitating errant monks, in order to demonstrate the purity and unity of the Saṅgha as a worthy field of merit for lay support but that the means of so doing differs: the re-acceptance of offending monks takes place in a ritual context in *Vinayapiṭaka* narrative, whereas, in the Dhammapada Commentary, the emphasis is on the diffusion of blame by attributing poor conduct to the ripening of a past deed, thereby retaining an untarnished image of the Saṅgha. It remains to consider the nature of the relationship between the *Vinayapiṭaka* and the Dhammapada Commentary in the light of framing strategies and the relationship between canonical and commentarial texts. The connection between the two texts is more striking than first appears. Not only do both texts exhibit a similar narrative structure (each gives a narrative context for the pronouncement of a rule/verse) but also a large number of the Dhammapada Commentary narratives are concerned with matters of monastic deportment. In addition, both texts include stories involving other ascetic groups.

The Dhammapada Commentary narratives concerning issues of discipline take a number of different forms.<sup>78</sup> Further comment on the issues of adaptation and derivation is necessary in this context. In his Synoptical Table of the literary relations between the Dhammapada Commentary and the *Vinayapiṭaka*, Burlingame lists

<sup>77</sup> For example, at the beginning of story of Puṇṇā, female slave (DhpA iii 321), there is an allusion to an episode from the *Cullavagga* in which Dabba the Mallian lights the way to lodgings with his glowing finger (Vin ii 76).

<sup>78</sup> There are stories describing specific offences against the monastic discipline and stories in which the circumstances for promulgating a precept are described. For example, the case of Seyyasaka, who becomes discontented and violates the first *Saṅghādisesa* rule (DhpA iii 5) and the Buddha institutes a precept against injuring plants and trees after a deity is forced to leave her tree-home, which is then felled by a monk for timber (DhpA iii 301-2). A version of both these episodes is to be found in the *Suttavibhaṅga* (Vin iii 110-2; Vin iv 34).



seventeen stories which he describes as being “derived” from this text, together with eleven further references (HOS 28. 46-7). Whilst it is evident that material is common to both sources, the question of derivation remains somewhat unclear. Even if Burlingame’s view that the Dhammapada Commentary narratives are derived from canonical and other sources is accepted, it still remains to account for the different ways in which the same material is used by various texts. If this view is based upon the idea that a commentary will embellish upon a canonical account, then it can be shown that this is not always the case. A good example of this is the narrative of Suppiyā, a female lay follower, who is described as foremost of those who attend the sick (A i 26). Suppiyā determines what medicines are needed by sick monks. and finding that one monk requires meat-broth and there is none, she cuts a piece of flesh from her thigh. In the Dhammapada Commentary, this episode is related briefly during the main narrative of the female lay follower, Visākhā (DhpA i 384-419), at the point where Visākhā’s servant has left a priceless matching jewellery set at the monastery and it has been put aside by Ānanda (DhpA i 411).

In the *Mahāvagga*, the episode is contained within a series of narratives about medicines (Vin i 216-218). It includes a full account of the incident and characterization of Suppiyā, exploring her dilemma and motivation:

Then it occurred to the woman lay follower, Suppiyā: “If that ill monk is unable to obtain meat-broth his affliction will greatly increase or he will pass away. It is not fitting in me, that I, having answered him in assent, should not have meat-broth conveyed”, and having taken a butcher’s knife, having cut flesh from her thigh, she gave it to a slave-woman ... (BD IV 296)

There is no association made with Visākhā. The account continues with the Buddha enquiring after the absence of Suppiyā and later the questioning of the monks about the incident. It closes with the Buddha’s rebuke of the monk for accepting the meat-broth without enquiring as to its source.<sup>79</sup> Since the so-called “embellishments” occur in “canonical” version, it cannot then be argued that the Dhammapada Commentary account is derived from the *Mahāvagga* account.<sup>80</sup> The Dhammapada Commentary omits the detail because it does not serve its purpose: to include the whole episode would shift control of the narratorial voice to Suppiyā when all that is intended is to suspend plot development in order to highlight the importance of Visākhā’s gift. In other words, the insertion of the Suppiyā episode at this juncture provides an interlude,

<sup>79</sup> The *Suttavibhaṅga* states that monks were not permitted to eat meat which they believed to have been killed especially for them (Vin iii 272).

<sup>80</sup> Burlingame does not argue this here: derivations are argued for in cases of complete stories.

a suspension of the plot to heighten the efficacy of Visākhā's subsequent gift of the jewellery set to the Saṅgha.<sup>81</sup>

A Dhammapada Commentary narrative which contains more detail than its *Vinayapiṭaka* counterpart is that of the thirty Pāṭheyakka monks.<sup>82</sup> Shortly after his enlightenment, the Buddha teaches Dhamma to a group of thirty young men. The *Mahāvagga* account presents the events leading up to the teaching of Dhamma by the Buddha in the context of its biographical narrative.<sup>83</sup> The Dhammapada Commentary account contains sufficient detail to situate the episode and goes on to describe what happens to the monks after they hear Dhamma (DhpA ii 32-3).<sup>84</sup> In this text, the group conversion is also mentioned in the account of the Buddha's biography but in the context of listing the number of conversions made and detailing the previous deeds of these various individuals and groups (DhpA i 87-8; 97-112). The Commentary has divided up the episode in accordance with its purpose of providing the context for the Dhammapada verse. The emphasis in the biographical account of the Commentary is on detailing the meritorious deeds of previous existences: to place a full telling of the thirty monks episode in the narrative of the Buddha's biography would deflect from this purpose.

It is difficult, in this case, to argue that the lengthier Dhammapada Commentary account embellishes the *Vinayapiṭaka* account, since it would then be necessary to make a case for the same having taken place in the story of Suppiyā, since it could be as easily argued that the *Mahāvagga* embellishes the Dhammapada Commentary account. None of this can be resolved satisfactorily unless there is some certainty as to the dating of the material. It is more fruitful to argue that the story is used for different purposes in each text. This does not presuppose a problematic "original source" from which each version draws but rather that the details are common to both and are included or not according to the way in which the material is presented in the text to make a particular

<sup>81</sup> It could be argued that the Dhammapada Commentary version is a summary of the *Mahāvagga* account. This is different from arguing that one account is necessarily derived from another simply because it occurs in a commentary rather than a canonical work and is more consistent with the view that individual texts utilize material in different ways.

<sup>82</sup> Before their conversion, they are identified as "a group of as many as thirty friends of high standing" (BD IV 31; *tiṃsamattā bhaddavaggiyā sahāyakā*, Vin i 23); "Thirty Youths known as the Bhaddavaggiyas" (HOS 28.197; *tiṃsajane Bhaddavaggiyakumāre*, DhpA i 87). Subsequently in both texts, they are referred to as the thirty Pāṭheyakka monks (Vin i 253; DhpA ii 32).

<sup>83</sup> After amusing themselves in a grove, the young men encountered the Buddha while they were searching for one of their party who had stolen their belongings. The Buddha teaches them Dhamma through sequential instruction (*anupubbikathā*) and they request to become monks (Vin i 23-4).

<sup>84</sup> In the Dhamma Hall, the monks discuss the swiftness of the thirty monks becoming arhats and the Buddha tells them that it is due to a previous deed of merit: they listened to the instruction of Mahātunḍila (J iii 286).

point.<sup>85</sup> In addition, this interpretative position does not preclude development in the detail of particular episodes.

This can also be observed between narratives in the same text. Some stories appear more than once in the *Vinayapiṭaka*, such as the story of the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu. There are two accounts of this (Vin ii 9-15 and Vin iii 179-86). Both accounts are the same until after the Buddha has described the procedure for instituting an act of suspension against the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu. At this point, the *Cullavagga* account (Vin ii 9-15) includes a section outlining “The Eighteen Observances connected with a formal act of Banishment” (Vin ii 14). The two accounts finish differently: the *Cullavagga* concludes with the procedure necessary for revoking a formal act of banishment, whereas a different tone is adopted in the *Suttavibhaṅga* and a detailed description of the kind of behaviour undertaken by a monk which brings disrepute to a family is provided. Again, it would be difficult to establish which of these two accounts is the “original version” since both use the same material. This fundamentally challenges the view that a commentarial narrative invariably embellishes upon a canonical text, revealing instead an underlying assumption about the nature of the relationship between canon and commentary on the part of interpreters.

Likewise, it cannot be automatically assumed that the occasional references to episodes from the *Vinayapiṭaka* which occur in the Dhammapada Commentary are a citation of source:

This religious instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to the Mother of Kāṇā. The story is found in the Vinaya. (HOS 29. 190)

Such a reference could equally as well be a further reference to a version which proposes a similar interpretation and to which the reader’s attention is drawn. Included in the first sentence, it functions as a cue to the reader to frame the Dhammapada Commentary account (DhpA ii 149-53) with the *Suttavibhaṅga* account, altering the way in which the reader apprehends what follows. Therefore, the reference to the *Suttavibhaṅga* account is not a citation of source but rather alerts the reader to another text, one which is perhaps modified or affirmed by that of the Commentary. Indeed, the *Suttavibhaṅga* account presents the events from the perspective of Kāṇā’s mother, a female lay follower, beginning with her gift of cakes to some monks, leaving her daughter with nothing to take back to her husband’s house. As a result of her failure to

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<sup>85</sup> There is an analogy here with the style of teaching employed by a monk in an oral situation. For a discussion of this see Cousins (1983); Collins (1991).

return, her daughter is superseded as chief wife.<sup>86</sup> In the Dhammapada Commentary, the story is centred on Kāṇā herself. As a result of the ruin of her married life, Kāṇā proceeds to abuse the monks. She reforms on encountering the Buddha and after hearing a sequential instruction (*anupubbikathā*), she becomes a Stream-Winner and spends her time ministering to the needs of the Community. Much emphasis is laid upon the blamelessness of the monks in this episode: this is reiterated twice in the narrative.<sup>87</sup> The use of intertextual framing enables the reader to discern that the Dhammapada Commentary modifies the *Suttavibhaṅga* account by expounding on the theme of monastic probity, a theme which is absent from the *Suttavibhaṅga* account.

In effect, references to *Vinayapiṭaka* narratives in the Dhammapada Commentary draw attention to particular textual locations of authority utilized by the Commentary. Occasionally, sections of text are quoted verbatim without an explicit identification of the *Vinayapiṭaka* passage:

It seems that these monks were in the habit of ornamenting their shoes, even as says the Sacred Word: “Now at that time the monks of Bhaddiya were in the habit of wearing ornamental shoes of various kinds. ... (HOS 30. 178)<sup>88</sup>

and other types of intertextual framing include the adoption of formats or motifs which have a similar structure to *Suttavibhaṅga* and *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga* narratives (as well as *Jātaka* and the *Udāna*).<sup>89</sup> The use of a similar formula in the Dhammapada Commentary has the effect of conjuring up *Suttavibhaṅga*, *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga* narratives, whereby the reader’s mode of understanding the text is modified by the

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<sup>86</sup> Burlingame’s translation makes it appear that the Buddha promulgated a precept that if a woman fails to return to her husband’s house, he is at liberty to take another wife (29. 190). It seems rather unlikely that the Buddha would institute such a precept. The precept referred to is *Pācittiya* xxxiv which is about moderation or restraint in how much food a monk should accept from a family — up to three bowlfuls per monk to be taken back to the monastery and shared with the other monks — in order to avoid similar situations arising (Vin iv 78-9). Rather than:

For at that time the Mother of Kāṇā was forced to send her daughter to her husband’s house empty-handed because on four different occasions she gave cakes she had fried to four monks; and in accordance with the precept laid down by the Teacher in such cases, Kāṇā’s husband had taken to himself another wife. (HOS 29. 190)

it should read:

For at that time the Mother of Kāṇā was forced to send her daughter to her husband’s house empty-handed because on four different occasions she gave cakes she had fried to four monks. The Teacher made known a precept regarding this matter. Kāṇā’s husband took another wife and when Kāṇā heard about this, she said, “These monks have ruined my household life”. And she reviled and abused every monk she saw. (DhpA ii 149)

<sup>87</sup> DhpA ii 150. Monks were not culpable if an offence had taken place before a precept was promulgated. This view is taken up elsewhere in the Commentary (DhpA ii 171).

<sup>88</sup> Here DhpA iii 451<sup>15-21</sup> = Vin i 190<sup>1-6</sup>. Burlingame inserts the phrase “even as says the Sacred Word” for *yathāha*, as a commentary for the benefit of his readers.



perception of similarities and differences.

It can be seen that a more fruitful line of enquiry regarding the relationship between the *Vinayapiṭaka* and the Dhammapada Commentary can be pursued if the material in common is viewed as being used for different purposes, rather than suggesting that one derives from the other. The connection between the texts is less surprising if a view of Pāli literature is accepted which does not posit a division between canon and commentary in the conventional way but regards the relationship between texts in terms of how each text is viewed in relation to other texts. In this way, it can be seen that material is used as part of an exegetical strategy to bestow legitimacy. The Dhammapada Commentary invokes episodes and passages from the *Vinayapiṭaka* as a way of supporting its interpretation and also subtly modifying the emphasis of the other. Thus, commentary is the mechanism by which the canon is closed and, in the process, the interpretation is shifted.

#### CONCLUSION

The dual preoccupation in the narratives of the Dhammapada Commentary with winning and retaining the loyalty of followers together with the emphasis upon impeccable outward conduct is now revealed. Those who claim spiritual attainment will naturally arouse expectations in the minds of those observing their behaviour and, on some occasions, this behaviour may fall far short. In seeking to address this eventuality, the *Vinayapiṭaka* narratives describe the rehabilitation of errant monks in order that the unity of the Saṅgha can be preserved. This strategy also appears in the Dhammapada Commentary and in this text, the means by which this is facilitated is through the diffusion of blame by relating of a Story of the Past in which the monk's actions are explained by predispositions as a consequence of previous misdeeds.

The preoccupation with exemplary conduct reflects the necessity of gaining and retaining followers, whose decisions regarding patronage are made on the basis of how they evaluate the outward conduct of the renouncers they encounter. One such aspect of monastic deportment, the exercise of supernatural powers, creates a tension in the texts. On the one hand, boasting superhuman perfections constituted a breach of one of the four *Pārājika* and signalled the end of the culprit's membership of the Saṅgha (Vin iii 90-1) and on the other, it is frequently used by the Buddha and his followers to defeat opposing views and to persuade potential supporters of their superior power. Through the display of superior supernatural powers, the possible influence of the views of other groups is rendered ineffectual and this is one of the various strategies employed in the

text to counteract differing views. Other views are represented by groups of non-Buddhist renouncers, as well as those within the monastic community with different interpretations of monastic discipline, indicating an environment of conflicting interpretations.

In such contexts, the exercise of supernatural powers in the *Dhammapada* Commentary serves as a device whereby control of the narratorial voice, the side of the story which occupies the reader's attention, is gained or retained. In the narrative of Santati, the king's minister and that of the Four Novices, supernatural powers are used to ensure that rival narrators are rendered powerless and present no opposition to the setting forth of a particular viewpoint. When the point of the narrative is unequivocal, as in that of Cunda the pork-butcher, the silencing of the rival narrator is accomplished swiftly and effectively. The Buddha's action in supporting the young monk's stance on an alleged insult undermines the authority of the monk's preceptor and a prominent female lay follower and is a result of substitution, a feature of narrative which may disrupt what framing activities seek to regulate, with the consequence that the narrative is no longer permeated by a "homogeneous attitudinal voice" and the reader may be left puzzled by the outcome of the narrative.

## CONCLUSION

It is the case that misunderstandings and disagreements arise when two interpretive communities do not share the same view of what constitutes a piece of literature and that this problem becomes more acute when the two communities are distant from each other both culturally and historically. In this study of the Dhammapada Commentary, an attempt has been made to avoid such misunderstandings by examining the text to reveal interpretative strategies of exegetes both past and present. Integral to this task has been a review the role of narrative in religious literature. An understanding of narrative as purely mimetic or didactic has predominated in the study of religious literature. However, to claim that the narrative form is designed either to imitate life or to edify a community is to ignore the variety of interpretative strategies a narrative can incorporate. (In fact, it could be argued with greater conviction that so-called doctrinal portions of Pāli literature are more obviously constructed to instruct followers.) Such simplified views of the role of narrative in religious literature stem from attempts to avoid some of the pitfalls in analysing narratives in religious texts, such as the difficulty of straddling two interpretive communities or the perilous enterprise of identifying relations between oral and written forms of texts. However, crucial to such interpretative activity is the importance of acknowledging the role of the reader in creating a text. In this way, the interpretative task does not revolve around intuiting the author's original intention but involves discovering the presence of interpretative strategies in the text and thereby the issues of importance to a community in constructing the text. Since the decision as to what constitutes literature is by nature a collective one, the activity of interpretation cannot thus be regarded as purely subjective.

Incorporated into such decisions about the nature of literature are preconceptions about the form of certain types of text. For example, too narrow a view of the relationship between canon and commentary will obscure the dynamic interplay of exegetical strategies which has occurred in the creation of a canon. In the case of collection of Pāli texts, it was argued that the *pāli-aṭṭhakathā* pairing, rendered as canon and commentary, is misleading, in that the distinction is not between texts *per se* but between styles of texts. Thus, some "canonical texts" have "commentaries" incorporated within them, such as parts of *Vinayapiṭaka*. In the case of the Dhammapada Commentary, the explanation of the meaning the verses is not achieved simply through verbal exegesis. The meaning of the verses also lies in ensuring that they are placed in a context which highlights a close association with the ultimate source

of authority in the tradition, the Buddha himself. An exegetical strategy employed to achieve this end is to provide the location and addressee for the verses of the Dhammapada. If a notion of canonicity is accepted which places the emphasis on authority rather than on documents, then it can be seen that commentaries play a crucial role in shaping what comes to be regarded as canonical. There is still a good case for accepting a notion of *the* Pāli Canon as one canon in Pāli, handed down by members of the Mahāvihāra lineage but included amongst the other canons must be those created by modern interpreters. Here Smith's words are pertinent: the theories of the ancient exegetes, developed over many years to understand and communicate the texts, cannot be the theories of modern interpreters.

The quest for legitimacy can also be detected by observing the way in which a text is to be seen in relation to other texts. In the Dhammapada Commentary, references are made to other texts from within the collection of Pāli texts, signalling to the reader that the text is to be framed accordingly. Here, a differentiation must be made between intertextual framing and an intertextual reference, since an intertextual reference still connotes a relationship of derivation and generates problems of establishing the direction in which this occurs. The reader understands these to be references to other textual locations and each reader will understand the precise location of these differently. For example, Horner and Ñāṇamoli identify all the sources of the formula for practising each Recollection in the *Visuddhimagga* as derived from "canonical" texts and the two scholars do not always give the same location. In other words, each scholar has framed the *Visuddhimagga* intertextually and their interpretations differ slightly. The citation of a canonical text does not mean that the *Visuddhimagga* is derived from that text but that it is being indicated to the reader that this text is being commented upon. Reid seems to suggest that intertextual framing only works in one direction: in the above example, through the activity of intertextual framing, a "previous discourse" is modified by the *Visuddhimagga* but it can also be argued that the reader's understanding of the *Visuddhimagga* can be altered through the presence of the other, since it indicates where the perception of authority lies.

The way in which the Dhammapada Commentary can be framed intertextually is apparent at the very beginning of the text. In the Prologue, it is stated that the Commentary is designed to awaken joy and delight (*pītipāmojja*) and the significance of such responses is revealed by framing the text intertextually. The reader frames the Commentary intertextually from other locations in which joy and delight occur, revealing how the text is to be seen in relation to these texts: in the Prologue, it is stated that joy and delight were evoked by the Buddha when he pronounced the verses of the Dhammapada. Rather than an aesthetic technique, it was found that such responses are



regarded as playing an integral role in spiritual development, producing readiness of the mind for further training. It can be argued that the incorporation of a text into spiritual practice serves almost as a guarantee of its survival. The Dhammapada Commentary has survived, not because it is a collection of folktales aimed at a lay audience but because it provides the authentication of the verses of the Dhammapada and through the evocation of emotional responses, the text is assured a place in practices which contribute towards spiritual attainment. Such a view is only possible once the relationship between emotion and reason has been reoriented to place the evocation of emotion in an ideological context.

At this point, Schopen's cautionary note concerning the construction of an image of Buddhism entirely through textual material is instructive. Indeed, texts are a source for understanding the discourses of Buddhism but only if they are treated as sources and not as oracles. It is clear that, within the narratives, there is great reflection upon practice, particularly regarding the nature of acceptable monastic behaviour. Significant portions of Pāli texts are concerned with correction of the errant behaviour of Saṅgha members, since a disunited Saṅgha presented the lay community with the unfavourable impression that gifts donated would not earn sufficient merit to facilitate spiritual rewards. It was shown how, in the *Vinayapiṭaka* narratives, the emphasis is on the rehabilitation of the culpable member and the confirmation of restored purity to the Saṅgha. The theme of rehabilitation is also present in the Dhammapada Commentary but the exegetical strategy for the dispersal of blame is different in the text: the Buddha narrates the story of an errant monk's previous life as an explanation for his poor behaviour. Thus, confidence in the Saṅgha as the field of merit for the lay community is restored, a desirable outcome, since lay allegiance was switched very easily between groups of renouncers. In connection with this issue, a preoccupation with gaining and retaining followers is apparent in the Dhammapada Commentary narratives and most commonly, the device employed in the Commentarial narratives to this end is the exercise of supernatural powers, superior to those of rival renouncer groups. This can also be understood as a device, whereby the disenfranchising of other views is achieved. Here, the potential for disruption of the reader's framing activity was noted. Narratorial control is gained or retained through substitution and dispossession from potential rival narrators. In most cases, this is achieved successfully through the demonstration of superior supernatural powers but, in one example at least, that of the young monk's insult, the sudden change of interpretative position may leave the reader puzzled. Again, it is necessary for a distinction to be made between narratorial control and the narrator: narratorial control concerns the extent to which a narrative is permeated by a single voice promoting a consistent view, regardless of the number of

narrators articulating this view.

The inclusion of the narrative of the Double Marvel in the Dhammapada Commentary also illustrates the way in which the reader frames the text intertextually. For some readers, the presence of the *Vinayapiṭaka* injunction against the exercise of supernatural powers to win followers alongside the Buddha's own performance of the Double Marvel reveals an inconsistency in the text. It is explained by some as the result of the Commentary preserving a discrepancy of views and by others as an indication that there are to be discerned different levels of discourse within Buddhist texts. Both seek to rationalize a perceived anomaly and ignore the form in which such episodes are presented. The exercise of supernatural powers is a technique found within commentarial narratives by which erroneous views are corrected. In other words, it is a technique peculiar to commentaries in a narrative form, similar to other devices, such as the monks' discussion and request to hear a Story of the Past and it serves the same purpose, to render opposing views invalid. This suggests that rather than merely legends and folktales, sophisticated exegetical strategies can be discerned in the narratives, confirming the view that an alternative appreciation of the nature and function of narrative in Pāli Commentaries is justified.

## APPENDIX

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### CONTROL OF THE NARRATORIAL VOICE AS A COMMENTARIAL TECHNIQUE IN THE DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY

Jennifer Haswell

If the purpose of commentary is to be understood as the explanation and interpretation of the words of a given text, it is tempting to consider a verbal gloss on a passage as the primary way in which the meaning of the text can be determined. In general, the commentaries on the Pāli canonical texts, the collection of Theravāda Buddhist scriptures, do not depart from this particular methodology and by and large they are dominated by the presence of verbal gloss with narrative used as illustrative support. However, there are several Pāli commentaries in which the narrative element constitutes the greater part. In such cases when verbal gloss forms the lesser part and narrative constitutes the greater part of a commentary, it is not unusual to find the narrative discarded in favour of the part which exhibits a more recognisable form of commentary. The following is an example of one scholar's lamentation on the lack of prominence given to verbal gloss by the commentator on the Dhammapada:

... the exegesis of the text becomes a matter of secondary importance altogether and is relegated to the background. ... To all intents and purposes, what was once a commentary has become nothing more or less than a huge collection of legends and folktales. (HOS 28. 26)

Yet even for this scholar, these "legends" and "folktales" do have discernible plots which guide the reader to an understanding of the "moral" of the story. Thus, the stories do have a function: they are illustrating the "point" expressed by the verse from the Dhammapada which occurs at the end of each story.

Nevertheless when there is a discrepancy between the content of the story and verse, this is attributed to some failure on the part of the commentator. However, these apparent "discrepancies" could perhaps indicate that there is more happening in the text than the view that the story illustrates the "point" of the verse allows. It is this aspect of the stories that will be examined.

Compared with most other Pāli commentarial texts, the Dhammapada Commentary<sup>1</sup> is unusual since it consists almost entirely of narrative material: a collection of 305 folktale-type stories which purport to give the circumstances in which the Buddha uttered a verse or verses from the Dhammapada. Verbal gloss is not absent from the Dhammapada Commentary: the words of the Dhammapada verse are glossed in the usual way by synonym, analogy, simile, etc. but the passages of verbal gloss are considerably less prominent than those of narrative material. It is possible that it is in the narrative arena that the exegesis takes place.

In the process of forming a commentary upon a text, one interpretation must be asserted and opposing interpretations refuted. This must necessarily involve some sort of "competition" between views. In an environment of conflicting interpretations, the struggle to possess the meaning of the text seems to describe more accurately the process involved in commenting upon a text.<sup>2</sup> According to Ian Reid, a fictional narrative text constitutes an arena in which rival voices compete with each other to

obtain control of the narratorial voice. In this way, narratives generate a “plurality of positions” (Reid 1992: 10) each with a different voice and yet not all of these voices can speak at once. Reid observes (1992: 80):

... the storytelling can proceed only for as long as interlocutors and rival narrators keep silent. Their part in a possible dialogue must be silenced in order that a single voice may be heard in the narrative mode.

In a text, the voices represent different sides of the story. In order to sustain a monologue, “an axiomatic precondition of narrative” (1992: 14), attempts by another side of the story to poach control of the narratorial voice must be avoided at all costs. In the *Dhammapada Commentary*, it is common to find differing views considered before being disqualified and the correct interpretation set out. Characters or groups of characters represent these different viewpoints. Considered in this way, it is possible that each story represents an arena in which these views are examined before the erroneous ones are disqualified and the correct interpretation set out.

In the following four examples from the *Dhammapada Commentary*, an attempt will be made to illustrate how the identification and disenfranchisement of other views is played out in the text itself as the struggle between potential narrators for control of the narratorial voice. In the first example, the narratorial voice places itself beyond the reach of its rivals; in the second example, dispossession of rival narrators is achieved by saying nothing; in the third, a rival narrator is identified and prevented from saying anything and in the fourth example, the rival narrator cannot be silenced.

#### SANTATI

In the first of these stories, Santati, a minister of King Pasenadi, has just returned to the city of *Sāvattthī*, after successfully suppressing a rebellion and he is ready to enjoy the rewards bestowed upon him by the king.

At the beginning of the story, the Buddha predicts that Santati will approach him, attain arahatship (liberation in this lifetime) after hearing a four-part verse and then rise into the air and pass into *nibbāna* (Sanskrit: *nirvāṇa*). Such anticipation of events, whilst limiting the way in which the story unfolds, still permits the entertainment of other possible plot developments. In the story of Santati, these are considered in the form of differing views entertained by the city’s inhabitants. Some of the citizens see this as an opportunity to catch the Buddha out whilst others, confident in the supernatural power of the Buddha, relish the prospect of seeing the mastery of both the Buddha and Santati. Of these, the former are described as those with wrong view and the latter are those with right view:

Those of the crowd who held false views thought to themselves, “Look at the way the monk Gotama acts! Whatever comes into his head he speaks with his mouth! This very day, so he says, that drunken sot [Santati], adorned as he is with all the adornments, will come into his presence and listen to the Law and pass into *nibbana*! But this is precisely what will not happen; this very day we shall catch him in a lie.” On the other hand [those with right view] thought to themselves, “Oh how great and how marvelous is the supernatural power of the Buddhas! To-day we shall have the privilege of beholding the grace of the Buddha and the grace of the king’s minister Santati.” (HOS 29. 313)

Meanwhile, Santati, having spent a week drinking to celebrate his military triumph, settles down to watch the performance of a female artiste, who is part of his reward for suppressing the rebellion. The dancer has fasted for seven days to improve the skill of



her performance and drops dead as she begins her routine. Santati, overcome by sorrow, seeks refuge from it in the Buddha:

“Reverend Sir, ... such sorrow has come upon me. I have come to you because I know that you will be able to extinguish my sorrow.” (HOS 29. 313)

Following the pronunciation of a verse by the Buddha, Santati becomes an arahat (one who has attained liberation in this lifetime) and the Buddha’s prediction is fulfilled. Control of the narratorial voice is now firmly held by one side of the story and there follows a process of reinforcement. The Buddha asks Santati to relate his deed of a previous birth but not standing on the ground (where he would still be vulnerable to subversion from a rival narrator) but at the height of seven palm trees above the ground. Poised cross-legged in the air, Santati proclaims his deed of merit putting himself quite literally beyond the reach of rival narratorial voices.<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of narratorial control means that the view represented by Santati can now be set forth. Santati describes how in a previous life he proclaimed Dhamma and urged others to perform works of merit and how this bore fruit even in the same lifetime: he went about richly adorned and generously equipped with the gifts of those to whom he had proclaimed Dhamma. In that existence, Santati, by imitating others who proclaimed Dhamma, obtained right view. This is “mundane” right view and is described as affected by the “outflows” and on the side of merit ripening to rebirth.<sup>4</sup> In this lifetime, as a result of hearing the Buddha preach Dhamma, Santati obtained “supermundane” right view, which is described as without the “outflows”, outwith the world of rebirth and a factor of the eightfold path.

The events which culminate in the rehearsal of Santati’s former deed of merit show the error of those with wrong view.<sup>5</sup> They had hoped that the Buddha’s prediction would not be fulfilled and that he would be revealed as a fraud. Once Santati begins his narration, there is no further opportunity for their point of view to be heard. The efficacy of merit-making for those with mundane right view is further emphasised when the Buddha collects Santati’s relics, causes a relic mound to be built over them and says,

“By doing reverence to these relics, the populace will earn much merit.” (HOS 29. 316)

#### THE FOUR NOVICES

In the second story, a woman asks her husband to go to the monastery and have four brahmins selected to receive the food she has prepared thinking that he will bring back some sufficiently ancient and venerable recipients. He returns, having been allocated four seven-year-old novices who also happen to be arahats. Losing her temper, she orders him to go back and fetch an old brahman. With each monk brought by the husband as a replacement for the novices, the possibility of earning greater merit from the gift of food increases but these substitutes are rejected by the woman because they do not meet her idea of a worthy recipient. Her rejection of them endangers her bid for control of the narratorial voice. The woman is finally dispossessed of any possibility of narratorial control by the third substitution, Sakka, king of the celestial world. Alerted by the heat generated by the novices’ good qualities, Sakka dons the disguise of an old and decrepit brahman and is received by the woman with great ceremony. However, to the woman’s horror, Sakka deliberately chooses to sit crosslegged on the ground acknowledging the superior spiritual attainment of the novices. Bearing in mind the manner in which Santati, the king’s minister, related his deed of merit poised cross-legged in the air, it is not surprising to discover what happens next. Sakka refuses to

budge and even though the woman and her husband succeed in dragging him out of the house, he remains seated in the same place:

So the Brahman and his wife both took hold of his two arms, belabored him about the back, and dragged him through the door of the house. Nevertheless, Sakka remained sitting in the same place in which he had sat before, waving his hands back and forth.

When the Brahman and his wife returned and saw him sitting in the very same place in which he had sat before, they screamed screams of terror and let him go. (HOS 30. 298)

Their terror marks their final loss of self-control, confirms the end of any narratorial control and they disappear from the narrative arena.

Sakka succeeds in wresting control of the narratorial voice from the brahman couple without uttering a single word so further reinforcement of this side of the story is necessary. Back at the monastery, the novices speak for the first time and they relate what happened to the group of monks. However, their version is still not sufficient reinforcement since the monks at the monastery harbour doubts and it is necessary for the Buddha to give his final sanction to their side of the story:

When the novices returned to the monastery, the monks asked them, ...“But were you not angry with them for what they did?” “No, we were not angry.” When the monks heard their reply, they reported the matter to the Teacher, saying, “Reverend Sir, when these monks say, ‘We were not angry,’ they say what is not true, they utter falsehood.” Said the Teacher, “Monks, they that have rid themselves of the evil passions oppose not them by whom they are opposed.” (HOS 30. 299)

In the previous examples, it has been shown how a rival narrator poaches control of the narratorial voice by exercising supernatural power. Santati proclaimed his side of the story loudly and clearly from a great height where no rival narrator could reach him. Sakka, the king of the deva-world, remained immovable until potential rival narrators, the brahman and his wife, gave up their attempts to dislodge him. In the next story, the potential rival narrator is reduced to a state in which it is impossible for him to tell his story.

#### CUNDA

For fifty-five years, Cunda has earned a living as a pork-butcher. Not only has he deliberately and cruelly taken the lives of countless animals but he has also performed no works of merit. One day he falls ill and he is visited with a vision of what awaits him as the fruit of his unrepentant ways. The shock is so great that Cunda begins to behave like a pig. He grunts and squeals and crawls around on his hands and knees. Reduced to this state, he can only tell his side of the story using a language no-one understands. However, he is even prevented from doing this when some men overpower him, gag him and barricade the door of his house:

Not a person was able to sleep in the seven houses round about. The members of his own household, terrified by the fear of death, unable otherwise to prevent him from going out, barricaded the doors of the house that he might not be able to go out, but might be confined within. Having so done, they surrounded the house and stood guard. Back and forth for seven days crawled Cunda within his house, suffering the torment of Hell, grunting and squealing like a pig. (HOS 28. 227)

After seven days as a human pig, Cunda dies and is reborn in the Avīci Hell. Although Cunda has now disappeared from the narrative arena of this world, he has now entered that of the Avīci Hell. Thus, rather than describe the torment he suffers there and risk handing the narratorial voice to his side of the story, the text refers the reader to the Discourse on the Deva Messengers (MLS III 223-30). This sutta describes the proceedings of the Avīci Hell, the destination of those unfortunates who, lacking right view are reborn there having failed to pay heed to a series of deva messengers. Amongst the tortures described are ones similar to those inflicted by Cunda on the pigs.<sup>6</sup>

The silencing of Cunda indicates that the text has successfully forestalled a rival narrator. The story is pervaded by one "homogeneous attitudinal voice" (Reid 1992: 125) and the result is relatively stable textual meaning. In this way, the reader is able to grasp that an evildoer cannot escape the consequences of an evil deed. This is the "point" of the story but only for as long as the "homogeneous attitudinal voice" is successful in fending off any attempts by rival narrators to wrest control of the narratorial voice and thus tell the story from a different perspective.

#### THE YOUNG MONK

In the final story, the necessity for one side of the story to be at the centre of the reader's attention can sometimes be at the expense of unequivocal and stable textual meaning. Visākhā's granddaughter is straining water for monks to drink when she sees the reflection of her face in the water and laughs. A young monk sees it and also laughs whereupon the granddaughter says that a "cuthead" is laughing. Taking offence, the young monk addresses her in the same way and she runs weeping to Visākhā.<sup>7</sup> The scene is now set for the two rival narrators, the granddaughter and the young monk, to bid for control of the narratorial voice. At first, it is the granddaughter who gets her side of the story heard: she tells her grandmother and Visākhā tells the young monk's preceptor. Both believe her version of the incident and both try to conciliate the young monk, declaring that "cut-head" is not an insult but a term of respect and admiration of the shaved head required by monastic rule. Visākhā says to the young monk:

"Reverend Sir, be not offended. You misunderstand that remark. It is an expression of profound respect for a noble monk with hair and nails cut close, who, as he goes his round for alms, holds in the folds of under and upper garments a potsherd cut and broken." The young monk replied, "Quite true, lay disciple; you understand that it is in accordance with my rule that the hair of my head and so forth are cut short. But was it proper for this girl to insult me by saying to me, 'You are a cut-head'?" (HOS 30. 1)

Both Visākhā and the preceptor are recognised figures of authority elsewhere in the textual world and so it seems that with the support of such respectable persons, the granddaughter will win. However, the young monk maintains throughout all this that it is improper for the granddaughter to address him in this way. At this point the Buddha enters the narrative arena and takes the side of the monk. The reason is made explicit in the text: the Buddha perceives that the young monk possesses the potential to be established on the Path to enlightenment. In order for this to happen, the Buddha must enable him to regain his self-control and so he favours the monk's side of the story:

"But Visākhā, is it proper for your granddaughter, merely because my disciples go about with hair and so forth cut short, on that account to insult them by calling them cut-heads?" The young monk immediately sprang to his feet, and extending his clasped hands in an attitude of reverent supplication, said,



“Reverend Sir, you alone correctly understand this matter; neither our preceptor nor our eminent female lay disciple understands it correctly.” (HOS 30. 2)

The young monk is a rival narrator who cannot be silenced and having gained control of the narratorial voice, his side of the story is now at the centre of the reader’s attention. As soon as the granddaughter loses control of the narratorial voice, she disappears from the narrative arena, taking the dispute with her. However, there are still some doubts concerning the cause of the quarrel which linger in the reader’s mind. The Buddha takes the side of the young monk and yet the monk’s behaviour is by no means exemplary: he returned the insult in a more extreme form, not only calling the girl but also her parents cut-heads. The Buddha supports the young monk’s position not because it is necessarily justifiable but in order to facilitate his conversion. Having perceived the young monk’s disposition as ready for conversion, he takes his side, apparently ignoring the young monk’s questionable conduct. The result is that the reader is left feeling uncertain as to whether the title “cut-head” is actually an insult. Nevertheless, since the Buddha is the ultimate source of authority in the textual world, the reader must accept the adjudication he gives.

This investigation began with the observation that the process of commentary involves the explanation and interpretation of the words of a text. However, using this approach alone, much else of what is happening in a commentarial text can be overlooked, particularly if the commentary incorporates a strong narrative element. Narrative texts generate a plurality of positions each with its own voice but not all of them can speak at once. Similarly, the commentarial process involves the consideration of other interpretations before deciding which position accurately represents the meaning of the text.

In the Dhammapada Commentary, the contrast between differing viewpoints is often made explicit: there is a division between those with right view and those with wrong view. In the story of Santati, the king’s minister, the townspeople were divided into conflicting camps over the course of future events. Those with right view believed the Buddha would demonstrate his mastery and those with wrong view set out to trick him. Santati obtained mundane right view in a previous life as a result of proclaiming Dhamma and in this lifetime he obtained supermundane right view after hearing the Buddha preach Dhamma.

Various devices are employed to gain control of the narratorial voice. In the story of Santati, the king’s minister and the story of the Four Novices, supernatural powers are used to ensure that rival narrators are rendered powerless and present no opposition to the setting forth of a particular viewpoint. When the point of the story is unequivocal, as in the story of Cunda the pork-butcher, the silencing of the rival narrator is accomplished swiftly and effectively whereas the ambivalence of the Buddha’s action in supporting the young monk leaves the reader unsatisfied with the outcome of the story.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Dhammapada Commentary, a fifth-century Pāli text, reproduces the division of the Buddhist world found in canonical texts. Here, the distinction is not primarily a social one, namely between monks and lay people, but rather a spiritual one — between those who have heard the Buddha preach Dhamma (and are established on the Path to Enlightenment) and those who have not. Thus, membership of the Buddhist monastic community does not guarantee spiritual attainment and, likewise, membership of the lay community does not necessarily imply a lack of spiritual achievement.



<sup>2</sup> There are indications in the Pāli commentarial literature that such an environment existed. Commentators refer to other commentarial positions using designations such as “some” or “others” or “the ancients” (*keci*, *apare* and *porāṇā*).

<sup>3</sup> See also the story of Jambuka in which Jambuka performs the same feat (HOS 29. 137). There is a variation on this motif: Mahāmoggallāna appears poised in mid-air at the seventh floor window of a miser’s palace as part of a strategy to obtain control of the narratorial voice (HOS 29. 51).

<sup>4</sup> Merit (*puñña*) is generated by performing certain actions such as supporting Buddhist monks by almsgiving or by listening to sermons. The outflows (*āsava*) refers to the influx of the consequences of previously generated *kamma* (Sanskrit: karma).

<sup>5</sup> A statement of wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*) is given at MLS III 114 (M iii 71-72; cf. A iv 226):

There is no (result from) what is given, there is no (result from) offerings, there is no (result from) sacrifice; there is no fruit, no result, of deeds well done or badly done; there is not this world, there is not a world beyond; there is (no benefit from serving) mother, there is (no benefit from serving) father; there are no opapatika beings; there are in the world no recluses and brahmins who have reached the highest point, who have proceeded rightly and who proclaim this world and the world beyond, having realised them by their own superknowledge.

<sup>6</sup>

Then, monks, the guardians of Niraya Hell speak thus to him: “My good man, what do you want?” He speaks thus: “I am thirsty, revered sirs.” Monks, the guardians of Niraya Hell, opening his mouth with a glowing iron spike, burning, aflame, ablaze, sprinkle glowing copper and bronze into his mouth, burning, aflame, ablaze. It burns his lips and it burns his mouth and it burns his throat and it burns his chest and it passes out below taking with it his bowels and intestines. Thereat he feels feelings that are painful, sharp, severe. But he does not do his time until he makes an end of that evil deed. (MLS III 229)

The following is how the tortures inflicted by Cunda on the pigs are described in the Dhammapada Commentary:

Whenever he wanted to kill a pig, he would fasten the pig securely to a post and pound him with a square club to make his flesh swell plump and tender. Then, forcing open the pig’s jaws and inserting a little wedge in his mouth, he would pour down his throat boiling water from a copper boiler. The hot water would penetrate the pig’s belly, loosening the excrement, and would pass out through the anus, carrying a little hot excrement with it. So long as there was even a little excrement left in the pig’s belly, the water would come out stained and turbid; but as soon as the pig’s belly was clean, the water would come out pure and clear. (HOS 28. 226)

<sup>7</sup> Visākhā is the foremost female lay disciple. She features several times in the Dhammapada Commentary, most notably in the story of her marriage (HOS 29. 59-84).

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## List of Abbreviations

All references to texts from the Pāli Canon and Commentaries are to the editions published by the Pāli Text Society and follow Norman's system of abbreviation (1983: 185-7). In addition, the following abbreviations have been adopted for English translations of some texts:

BD	"The Book of the Discipline"
DB	"Dialogues of the Buddha"
DD	"The Dispeller of Delusion"
GS	"The Book of Gradual Sayings"
HOS	"Harvard Oriental Series" (volumes 28-30, Buddhist Legends)
ID	"The Inception of Discipline"
KS	"The Book of Kindred Sayings"
MLS	"The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings"
PPn	"The Path of Purification"
UdCom	"The Udāna Commentary"

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